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Articles & Other Documents:

[U.S. Embassy Bombing in Yemen: Counterterrorism Challenges in Weak States.](#)

[Somali Pirates Turn Route to Suez Into 'Most Dangerous' Waters.](#)

[India, Pakistan Say Peace Process 'Under Strain,' Pledge Talks.](#)

[Russia Stalls Talks on Iran Nuclear Plans.](#)

[North Koreans Bar Inspectors at Nuclear Site.](#)

[Homeland Security Committee Approves Key Federal IT Legislation.](#)

[DHS Radiation Detection Program May Exceed Cost Estimates by \\$1 Billion, GAO Says.](#)

[DHS Wants to Keep Cyber Role.](#)

[U.S. Tops List as Source for Botnet Attacks.](#)

[Commandant Exhorts: Figure Out Facebook.](#)

[US: North Korea talks not dead.](#)

[China urges "flexibility" on North Korea nuclear moves.](#)

[Unease Grows As N. Korea Asks To Remove IAEA Seals From Reactor.](#)

[Analysts Fear Pakistan Could Fall To Extremists.](#)

[USAF Recommends Nuke Management Changes At Summit.](#)

[Why the Car Bomb Is a Terrorist's Best Weapon.](#)

[Gates Is Pessimistic On Pakistani Support.](#)

[EU: Iran Close To Nuclear Arms Ability.](#)

[Air Force, Army Discipline 17 for Improper Fuse Shipment.](#)

[Two Terrorism Suspects Arrested on KLM Flight.](#)

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The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
PolicyWatch #1404
September 24, 2008

U.S. Embassy Bombing in Yemen: Counterterrorism Challenges in Weak States

By Michael Knights

Last week, al-Qaeda affiliates attempted to storm the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, leaving seventeen dead, including one American woman. The attack highlights the ongoing problem of terrorism in Yemen, where the United States has struggled to achieve an adequate level of counterterrorism cooperation. The challenge for U.S. policymakers is to achieve greater leverage over the Yemeni government, strengthen that government's capacity to counter terrorism, and simultaneously support much-needed political and economic reforms in the country.

Al-Qaeda in Yemen

The September 17 attack saw two suicide car bombs fail to breach the wall before a four-man team unsuccessfully rushed the embassy on foot, disguised as local security forces and wearing suicide bomb vests. This is the second attack on the U.S. embassy in Sanaa this year; the previous one was a rocket attack on March 18 that killed two Yemenis. These actions and nearly a dozen other terrorist attacks since 2006 were undertaken by cells that brand themselves as "al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Jund al-Yemen Brigades." Since their activation in 2006, these groups have been led by terrorists who escaped from a Yemeni prison that same year. The groups also have offshoots in neighboring states such as Saudi Arabia, where government officials raised the country's alert level in August in reaction to evidence of Yemeni-based fighters seeking to carry out attacks in the kingdom.

The government of Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Salih has moved energetically to wipe out the current crop of active al-Qaeda affiliates in his country. Of the twenty-three terrorists who escaped in 2006, only two are on the loose -- Qassim al-Raymi and Nasir al-Wahayshi. Militant communiques demand the release of prisoners, the cessation of government harassment of fighters traveling to Iraq, and the distancing of Yemen from the United States.

Shortfalls in Cooperation

Although the government is willing to hunt down committed anti-Salih militants, other elements of the militant Islamist community continue to receive a free pass from the government. The Yemeni government actively recruited for the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan in the 1980s and for subsequent jihadist campaigns in the 1990s. These "Arab-Afghan" fighters were also used by the government to fight the socialists from the south of the country. By 1998, a tit-for-tat war broke out between the Yemeni government and the militants, and many Arab-Afghans remained embedded in the government security apparatus and political structure. Yemen's unwillingness to support the U.S. investigation of the October 2000 USS Cole bombing in Aden marked the low point in U.S. confidence in Yemen as a counterterrorist partner.

Salih moved quickly after the September 11 attacks to visit the White House and offer his assistance in the global war on terror. In return, the Yemeni government expected economic assistance, military aid, and political support. Increased U.S. training and operational support to the Yemeni military gave the Salih government greater capacity to crack down on terrorist groups. Terrorist plots against the U.S. and other Western embassies in Sanaa were foiled

in 2001 and 2002. A number of plotters from the suicide boat attacks against the USS Cole and the oil tanker Limburg were arrested or killed in 2002, notably Sinan al-Harithi, the head of al-Qaeda in Yemen.

Reduced U.S. Leverage

Following these apparently decisive blows to al-Qaeda in Yemen, the United States turned its attention away from Yemen's counterterrorism efforts and refocused on the regime's political and economic shortfalls. Yemen was rejected from the threshold phase of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) in November 2005 for failing in all eight qualifying categories, ranging from governance reform and political and press freedoms to health, education, and human rights. U.S. nonmilitary assistance to Yemen dropped as low as \$7.9 million in 2005, compared to \$40.6 million by the United Kingdom in the same year. Even today, with Yemen admitted to the MCA, the U.S. government is offering only \$20.6 million -- a sum linked to the extradition of wanted terrorists, including several of the USS Cole attackers.

The problem is that the amount of U.S. aid is very small in comparison to that of other Western governments (the United Kingdom plans to raise Yemen aid to \$100 million by 2011) and tiny compared to multibillion-dollar, no-questions-asked aid pledged by the Chinese and Gulf Arab governments. U.S. leverage has never been properly developed, so it is no surprise that the Salih government will not make painful compromises to secure fairly minor U.S. rewards.

State Failure, Regional Security, and Counterterrorism

Yemen's terrorism challenge is complicated by the strong possibility that Yemen will gradually succumb to state failure. Yemen's economy is steadily collapsing, and during the 2012-2018 timeframe, fuel and power shortages will further reduce the living standard of the fast-growing population (set to double by 2020).

From the perspective of broader regional security, it is critical to prevent Yemen from becoming a failed state. Yemen faces a very active terrorist threat from al-Qaeda affiliates, an intermittent tribal insurgency in the north, and growing tension across the country related to economic and political grievances. A collapsed Yemen would function as an arms market, terrorist haven, and economic migrant route that could complicate security in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

U.S.-Yemen counterterrorism cooperation is also threatened by a weakened Yemeni state. As Salih's rule becomes weaker, his government is reaching out to radical Islamist allies to prop it up. Since 2004, the government has made use of former jihadists to fight the Houthi clan rebels in northern Yemen, with such fighters receiving releases from house arrest, payment, and even control of Houthi land and mosques. Sheikh Abd al-Majid al-Zindani, named as a specially designated global terrorist by the U.S. Treasury Department in February 2004, plays a senior role in the Islah political party, which Salih's junta of generals are likely to turn to as a political partner when his third and (by law) final term comes to a close in 2013.

Rebuilding U.S. Leverage

When Yemen's current crop of experienced militant leaders is ground down -- a moment that is approaching -- it may appear that the "job is done" once again, and U.S. policy is likely to focus on Yemen's shortcomings: its unwillingness to convict Yemeni returnees who served in Iraq; its tendency to loosen arrest conditions and overturn terrorist charges as soon as international attention has turned elsewhere; and its failure to hand over terrorists wanted by the United States or to guarantee that the 108 Yemenis being released from Guantanamo Bay will be kept from reoffending. All these complaints are valid, but reiterating them is less valuable than finding practical ways of restoring U.S. leverage and influence over the Yemeni government.

It may be that U.S., British, and Saudi aid can be linked to greater oversight of Yemeni terrorist prisoners, but this is essentially a tactical detail. An increasingly weak Yemeni government is unlikely to make painful compromises as long as U.S. nonmilitary aid is far lower than that of countries that provide much more and impose no conditionality. Aside from ensuring counterterrorism cooperation, there is a strong strategic rationale for the United States to ramp up its nonmilitary aid to help prevent state failure. Historically, the chances of receiving counterterrorism cooperation from a collapsed Yemen are zero, and the cost of rebuilding a failed state far outweighs the costs of preventing such a collapse.

Michael Knights is a Lafer international fellow of The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, and the Persian Gulf states.

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

BloombergNews.com

September 25, 2008

Somali Pirates Turn Route to Suez into 'Most Dangerous' Waters

By Gregory Viscusi

Sept. 25 (Bloomberg) -- Fishing for tuna in the Indian Ocean 420 miles from the Somali coast, Captain Patrick Helies figured his trawler was far enough out to be safe from pirates. It wasn't. On the night of Sept. 13, Somali brigands attacked, hitting his French-flagged ship with two rocket-propelled grenades. Helies and his crew of 25 outran the smaller pirate boat in choppy seas without injury or significant damage.

Helies' 279-foot trawler, Le Drennec, is one of 54 boats attacked so far this year in the Gulf of Aden and off Somalia, the latest hot spot for piracy. Somali pirates are pursuing ever-larger prey en route to the Suez Canal ever-farther from shore. They are currently holding 12 vessels and 240 crewmembers hostage.

"Every ship going through the Gulf of Aden faces a serious chance it will be attacked," said Giles Noakes, head of security for Bimco, a shipping association. "It's beyond the crisis stage, and the world has to ask if it considers this acceptable." Ships using the Suez Canal to travel between Europe and Asia must pass through the gulf. In the first half of this year, 21,080 vessels used the Egyptian canal, one-tenth of the world's seaborne trade. The attacks have led shipping companies to ask for military intervention by the United Nations and to warn that they may start routing ships around the Horn of Africa, increasing costs and risking rougher seas. French President Nicolas Sarkozy also has called for an international response. The attacks already have cut gulf fishing. Helies and the operators of more than 40 other French and Spanish tuna vessels have dropped anchor off the Seychelles, temporarily abandoning their livelihoods.

Foreign Navies

"We had followed every bit of advice and we were still attacked," said Jean-Yves Labbe, chief executive of CMB, the French owner of Helies' boat. "We are in a situation that has spun out of our control." The pirates haven't been cowed by foreign navies. Bandits seized a Hong Kong freighter and a Greek-owned carrier in the two days after French commandos freed a yacht and its crew Sept. 15, killing one pirate and capturing six.

Worldwide, the number of pirate attacks is in decline, to 263 in 2007 from 329 in 2004 and 445 in 2003, according to the International Maritime Bureau. That progress followed increased patrols in the Straits of Malacca by the Malaysian, Indonesian and Singapore navies. Those waters had 38 attacks in 2004, falling to seven in 2007 and two in the first half of this year, the IMB said.

Beefed Up Patrols

"Once the Indonesians beefed up their naval patrols and cooperated with Malaysia and Singapore, the problem was basically over," said Noel Choong, who runs the IMB's piracy reporting center. "That's not going to be possible in Somalia, which has no government" because it has been split into loosely run breakaway regions since 1991. The number of attacks off Somalia rose from 10 in 2004 to 44 in 2007 before hitting 54 so far this year, the IMB said. "Somalia is by far the most dangerous area in the world," said Klaus Kjaerulff, chief executive of Danish shipping company D/S Torm A/S. A 115,000-ton Torm tanker was saved from pirates two months ago by the fortuitous arrival of a U.S. warship.

About 1,200 Somalis, mostly former fishermen or soldiers, are actively involved in piracy, the IMB said. They use secondhand Russian trawlers to launch radar-evading speedboats for the attacks. "It's a lucrative business," said Fred Burton, a vice president at Stratfor, a risk management company. "They seem to use their proceeds to buy better ships and weapons."

Rogue Fishermen

The pirates are helped by rogue Somali fishermen who act as lookouts and issue warnings via satellite phones, according to a book by Patrick Marchesseau, the captain of a French yacht, *Le Ponant*, that was held for a week in April. Like most seized ships, *Le Ponant* was taken to the port of Eyl in Somalia's Puntland region. Its owners, Marseille-based CMA-CGM, reclaimed the boat after paying a \$2.15 million ransom, delivered at sea in three bags, Marchesseau said. French commandos recovered some of the money when they took six pirates prisoner in a helicopter-borne raid in Somalia, the French defense ministry said.

President Sarkozy's Sept. 16 request for a global anti-piracy effort has elicited a response so far only from Spain, which plans to dispatch a P-3 Orion surveillance plane to France's base in Djibouti, on the Gulf of Aden.

Pirate Ship Seized

Other countries have acted independently. Denmark sent the frigate *Absalon* to the area in August and seized a pirate ship. On Sept. 18, Kuala Lumpur-based MISC Bhd, the world's largest owner of liquefied natural gas tankers, lifted a two-week ban on its ships using the Suez Canal after Malaysia sent three naval escorts.

A June 2 Security Council resolution allows warships to enter Somali waters to combat pirates. The U.S., France, the Netherlands, Denmark, Canada, Germany, and the U.K. all have ships in the Indian Ocean supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's military in Afghanistan. Some forces have rules against firing first.

"The French and the Danes have taken action, but other countries have rules of engagement that prevent them from being effective against piracy," Noakes said.

To contact the reporter on this story: Gregory Viscusi in Paris at gviscusi@bloomberg.net

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

BloombergNews.com
September 25, 2008

India, Pakistan Say Peace Process 'Under Strain,' Pledge Talks

By Ed Johnson

Sept. 25 (Bloomberg) -- Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh acknowledged the peace process between their nuclear-armed nations has been "under strain" and pledged new talks to get it back on track. Meeting in New York yesterday, they agreed that officials will hold anti-terrorism discussions next month to address "mutual concerns," including the July bombing of the Indian Embassy in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul.

The nations will schedule a fifth round of peace talks, known as the composite dialogue, in the next three months and try to enforce their cease-fire in the divided Himalayan region of Kashmir, Zardari and Singh said in a statement. Their meeting at the United Nations General Assembly is the first since Zardari's inauguration earlier this month.

Pakistan and India began improving relations in April 2003 after they came close to fighting a fourth war the previous year. The process has boosted cooperation on fighting terrorism and rebuilt diplomatic, transport and sporting links. Cease-fire violations across the so-called Line of Control in Kashmir in recent months and the embassy bombing in Kabul increased tensions between the nations.

The Afghan government said the suicide bomb attack, which killed at least 40 people, was carried out with the assistance of Pakistan's intelligence service. The government in Islamabad denies the allegation.

Musharraf's Pledge

The government in New Delhi has said the peace process hinges on a January 2004 pledge by Pakistan's former president Pervez Musharraf not to let Pakistani territory be used by terrorists to attack India. Zardari reassured Singh that his government "stands by" the commitment, according to the statement.

Kashmir, which is divided between India and Pakistan and claimed in full by both, is at the root of tensions between them and the cause of two of their three wars fought since independence from Britain in 1947.

Pakistan rejects Indian charges it provides support for Islamic separatists fighting Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir state. More than a dozen Islamic groups have been fighting since 1989 for the state's independence from India or its merger with Pakistan in a conflict that has killed about 50,000 people.

The leaders "agreed that violence, hostility and terrorism have no place in the vision they share of the bilateral relationship," according to the statement. "Severe action would be taken against any elements directing or involved in terrorist acts." They agreed to expand commerce and economic cooperation and decided to open the Wagah to Attari road link and the Khokrapar to Munabao rail route to all "permissible items of trade."

Trade across the Line of Control in Kashmir will begin Oct. 21 on the Srinagar to Muzaffarabad and Poonch to Rawalakot roads.

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20670001&refer=india&sid=aZAILGRXHKOs>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Financial Times (FT.com)
September 24 2008

Russia Stalls Talks on Iran Nuclear Plans

By Harvey Morris at the United Nations and James Blitz in London

The leading powers were forced to cancel a meeting due to be held on Wednesday on the Iranian nuclear threat after Russia said the talks were not urgent, in a further sign of Moscow's frostier relations with the west after the Georgia crisis. Foreign ministers from the US, China, Russia, France and the UK – the five permanent, veto-holding members of the United Nations Security Council – and Germany were due to meet to discuss further sanctions aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear programme.

The cancellation came on the eve of a meeting on Wednesday between Condoleezza Rice, US secretary of state, and Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister – their first since Washington came out forcefully against Russian military intervention in Georgia last month.

Western members of the "3 plus 3 group" had hoped to set out the framework for a fourth set of UN sanctions to force Iran to comply with demands that it suspend uranium enrichment. But Andrei Nesterenko, Russian foreign ministry spokesman, said on Tuesday night: "We see no fire alarm which would require us to put off other things in the extremely busy week of the UN General Assembly." Western diplomats had feared that a united front on Iran might be the first casualty of splits within the Security Council, which have been exacerbated by the Georgia crisis.

A senior British official said on Wednesday: "It is in Russia's strategic interests that pressure is put on Iran over its nuclear plans, so it's not clever to have sent the Iranians this signal." However, diplomats said the cancellation of Wednesday's meeting did not necessarily mean Russia was abandoning the strategy of incremental pressure on Tehran. A meeting on the margins of the General Assembly at some level was still possible, they said. "I hope and expect that this is not the end of the 3 plus 3 group's efforts," said Frank-Walter Steinmeier, German foreign minister. He also suggested that the Russian rebuff might be a response to Washington's opposition to a meeting of

the Group of Eight industrialised nations on the margins of the General Assembly, which would have included Moscow.

In a tough speech last week, Ms Rice accused Russia of being “increasingly authoritarian at home and aggressive abroad”. George W. Bush, in his final speech as US president to the world body on Tuesday, said Moscow’s intervention in Georgia was a violation of the terms of the UN’s charter. The prospect of division in the Security Council over Iran might encourage Tehran to maintain its defiance in the face of international demands.

Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, Iran’s president, used his address to the General Assembly in New York on Tuesday to declare that the “atomic age is over” and that Iran had provided all the information it could on its nuclear programme. Iran could not prove a negative in the face of western-led accusations that its peaceful nuclear programme was geared towards producing a bomb, Mr Ahmadi-Nejad said. He added that the campaign against Iran was orchestrated by the US and western allies who dominated the Security Council. “If we had any complaints against the US, who would we turn to?” he asked a press conference. “The Security Council, on which the US has a veto?”

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

The New York Times
September 25, 2008

North Koreans Bar Inspectors at Nuclear Site

By STEVEN LEE MYERS and ELAINE SCIOLINO

WASHINGTON — North Korea’s move to resume the reprocessing of plutonium, perhaps as soon as next week, left the country on the verge of restarting a nuclear weapons program whose shutdown had been portrayed by the White House as a significant diplomatic achievement. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Wednesday that the United States still hoped to preserve a hard-won agreement that called for the North to dismantle its nuclear reactor. But North Korea has refused to resume talks, and no new ones are planned.

The International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna announced Wednesday that North Korea had barred international inspectors from a reprocessing plant at its nuclear reactor complex in Yongbyon. The agency said that North Korea, which tested its first nuclear device in 2006 and is believed to have enough plutonium for at least six nuclear bombs, intended to resume production of nuclear weapons-grade fuel there within a week.

While reversible in theory, any resumption of nuclear work would violate the terms of the agreement, which was announced with fanfare in June and solidified, it appeared, by North Korea’s public demolition of a cooling tower at Yongbyon. North Korea’s actions have at best returned negotiations to where they stood months ago, leaving little time for a resolution before the next American administration takes office in January.

Senior Bush administration officials said Wednesday that they believed that North Korea was engaging in transparent brinkmanship to extract concessions as the United States sought to cement the country’s commitment to give up its nuclear weapons with a strict and intrusive verification system. “They don’t have a lot of ways to get leverage, and this is one of them,” one Bush administration official who was involved in the negotiations said of North Korea’s move. The official, like others interviewed for this article, spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss diplomatic efforts and internal administration assessments.

North Korea’s actions are likely to provide fodder to conservative critics of the administration, who say that North Korea has no intention of giving up its nuclear program and that it is blackmailing the United States and its negotiating partners to subsidize North Korea’s failing economy. But its elaborately choreographed violation of the agreement in publicly announced steps over the past few weeks could also be part of a tough negotiating stance that

North Korea feels is necessary to obtain the security guarantees and financial aid the country was promised as part of the nuclear accord.

North Korea's negotiators have strenuously complained that the Bush administration has yet to fulfill its promise to remove North Korea from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, as President Bush announced in June that he was prepared to do, and instead has made new demands. Those include requiring North Korea to accept the verification system before the United States would carry out reciprocal steps, a condition that a senior administration official acknowledged was not put in writing. "It is, I think, more serious than just brinkmanship on the part of the North Koreans," said Charles L. Pritchard, a former ambassador and special envoy for talks with North Korea who is now president of the Korean Economic Institute in Washington. "They're trying to recoup what they've given away for nothing, from their point of view." If North Korea follows through, it would be the second time the country resumed production of the material for nuclear weapons during President Bush's time in office. In acting now, when the White House is already consumed with a financial crisis, North Korea may be adopting a strategy similar to one it employed at the beginning of 2003, when it restarted its nuclear program just as the United States was preparing to invade Iraq.

Complicating the matter is uncertainty over the health of North Korea's leader, Kim Jong-il, who administration officials said Wednesday had a stroke last month that debilitated him physically and possibly mentally. That has raised concerns that hard-liners may be acting forcefully to demonstrate that North Korea faces no leadership crisis during Mr. Kim's illness. American and European officials, trying to assess the seriousness of the North Korean intentions, noted that so far, experts who have been overseeing the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear program, including some Americans, had not yet been expelled from the country. "We don't see the tensions on the ground," the senior administration official said.

The reprocessing plant, which turns spent nuclear fuel rods into weapons-grade plutonium, is the most secret part of the Yongbyon nuclear complex. Its reactivation would be significant, even though the main reactor has been partly dismantled under the agreement.

Moreover, allowing international inspectors to monitor activity at the plant was one of the most significant concessions the North made as part of the agreement on ending its program. If inspectors remain barred from the plant, it will become far more difficult to keep track of how much nuclear fuel the North produces. "There are no more seals and surveillance equipment in place at the reprocessing facility," Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in Vienna.

Arms control experts say that if the plant is in good repair, it will take little time to restart the plutonium-making process, and that making pure plutonium from spent fuel rods once the process starts could be only weeks away. It would take two to three years, by contrast, for North Korea to produce extractable new plutonium if it restarted its reactor. The Bush administration immediately warned North Korea not to reactivate the plant, while urging it to resume negotiations on ways to verify its lengthy declaration of its nuclear activities over many years.

Ms. Rice, in New York for the United Nations General Assembly session, said a decision by North Korea to resume reprocessing nuclear material "would only deepen its isolation." She has met with the foreign ministers of China, South Korea and Russia, all parties to the negotiations with the North Koreans. "Everyone knows what the path ahead is," she said. "The path ahead is for there to be agreement on a verification protocol so that we can continue along the path of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." She did not elaborate on what additional steps the administration would take. So far at least, officials said, it has not decided to retaliate by, for example, suspending shipments of heavy fuel oil that China, Russia, South Korea and the United States have been making under the agreement. The next American shipment is not due until October. Its fate could depend on whether the North Koreans move ahead.

The impasse over the verification of North Korea's denuclearization reflected deep suspicions on both sides. Mr. Bush has been criticized by some conservatives who say that the initial accord was not vigorous enough in verifying the North's nuclear activities, including what officials say is a separate and still secret uranium program and evidence of the transfer of nuclear technology to other countries, specifically Syria. "We're still not convinced they have given us a true picture of what they may or may not have done," the senior administration official said Wednesday, underscoring, he said, the need for a vigorous protocol for future inspections. The official involved in the negotiations said that the United States had presented a draft of its verification proposals to the North Koreans in

August and that it included "the max." "We put the most we could on paper, anticipating they would bargain," the official said.

Derek J. Mitchell, a former Defense Department official now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that the American insistence on extracting a verification system was justified and probably difficult for Mr. Bush and his most hawkish aides to accept otherwise. "I'm not sure any action can be taken, or is politically viable, without a demonstration of North Korean good faith," he said. At the same time, though, Mr. Mitchell noted that the United States had so far not conceded much, undercutting the process.

While Mr. Bush gave Congress 45 days notice that he intended to remove North Korea from a list of terrorist sponsors, he did not take that step before that window closed on Aug. 11. Also, he lifted sanctions under the Trading With the Enemy Act but imposed new ones under a little publicized emergency declaration he issued the same day in June.

"We haven't given up much yet," Mr. Mitchell said, adding that he, like others, assumed that there was little chance for an agreement during the final months of this administration. "Meanwhile, they have frozen their program. It is step by step, action for action. We can't cut corners."

Steven Lee Myers reported from Washington, and Elaine Sciolino from Paris. William J. Broad and Thom Shanker contributed reporting from New York, and Choe Sang-hun from Seoul, South Korea.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/25/world/asia/25korea.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&ref=world&pagewanted=print

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

NextGov.com
September 24, 2008

Homeland Security Committee Approves Key Federal IT Legislation

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on Tuesday approved two key pieces of information technology legislation, including a measure that would require agencies to appoint a chief information security officer. Comment on this article in The Forum. Lawmakers voted out of committee both the 2008 Federal Information Security Management Act (S.3474) as well the 2008 Information Technology Oversight Enhancement and Waste Prevention Act (S.3384).

The FISMA legislation requires agencies to appoint a qualified chief information security officer who would be responsible for monitoring, detecting and responding to cybersecurity threats, and report to the chief information officer. The IT oversight bill seeks to improve agency performance and congressional oversight of major federal IT projects.

"It was extremely sobering to learn how often and how easily agency information networks can be compromised," said Sen. Tom Carper, D-Del., who introduced the FISMA bill. Carper's bill also would require agency inspectors general to measure the effectiveness of information security policies as well as direct the Homeland Security Department to conduct strategic test attacks against agency networks to uncover vulnerabilities and to improve security. "Recent reports of foreign governments hacking into federal systems remind us that the federal government is not doing enough to guarantee the security of its computer systems and the vast databases within them," said Committee Chairman Joseph Lieberman, I-Conn. "This legislation will help safeguard those systems and standardize information security measures across the government."

The committee rejected an amendment proposed by Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., that would create a chief information security officers council. But Carper said he was open to compromise on the issue. One option discussed included adding a three-year sunset and review provision to such a council. The committee approved the FISMA bill without any changes, though Carper is expected to offer amendments to address Coburn's concerns as well as some additional privacy issues before sending it to the Senate floor for a vote.

The IT oversight bill also received bipartisan support. The legislation would make it easier for agencies to terminate projects that fail to meet their budget and schedule deadlines, something that industry experts have advocated for a while. Carper said the decision to suspend funding for a project most likely would reside with the agency head. Carper was cautiously optimistic that both bills would pass the Senate before the end of the current legislative session.

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

GovernmentExecutive.com
September 24, 2008

DHS Radiation Detection Program May Exceed Cost Estimates by \$1 Billion, GAO Says

By Katherine McIntire Peters

In a briefing for lawmakers and staff on Tuesday, the Government Accountability Office estimated the cost of the Homeland Security Department's program to equip ports of entry with radiation detection equipment will be \$3.1 billion. That's \$1 billion more than the agency told the White House and Congress it would cost last spring. The department's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office estimated it would cost \$2.1 billion to furnish ports with the equipment, an assessment GAO says "is unreliable because it omits major project costs and relies on a flawed methodology."

Preventing nuclear and radiological material from being smuggled into the United States has become a top national priority in recent years. In 2005, the White House created the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office at Homeland Security to manage the acquisition and deployment of radiation detection equipment at ports of entry. Previously those responsibilities were under the department's Customs and Border Protection directorate.

In briefing documents presented to Congress, GAO auditors wrote, "We believe our estimate helps clarify the program's true cost, while DNDO's estimate obscures it."

The agency disputes GAO's charge.

There are several points of contention between the nuclear detection office and GAO. For one thing, they calculated life cycle costs differently: GAO included equipment operation and maintenance costs in its estimates where the Homeland Security agency did not. "GAO incorrectly assumes DNDO's budget submission for [advanced spectroscopic portal monitors] should include operation and maintenance costs when in fact those are costs assumed by Customs and Border Protection. These costs are important but would never be included in a DNDO budget submission," Jerald Levine, director of Homeland Security's Departmental GAO/OIG Liaison Office, wrote in a Sept. 9 letter to GAO in response to its findings.

GAO maintained those costs need to be included to give lawmakers a complete understanding of the true program costs. A more troubling disagreement between the nuclear detection office and GAO centers on what exactly the program aims to accomplish. In September 2006, the nuclear detection office and CBP produced a project execution plan that defined the objectives, scope, schedule, costs and funding requirements to deploy radiation detection systems at U.S. ports of entry.

The following month, Congress enacted the SAFE Port Act, which made the nuclear detection office responsible for developing and deploying a system to detect radiation at all ports of entry. The project execution plan included elements of CBP's initial program for deploying radiation detection monitors, known as polyvinyl toluene monitors, along with handheld devices that could identify specific radioactive isotopes. The polyvinyl toluene monitors cannot distinguish between dangerous and benign radioactive materials, thus the handheld devices were needed.

To address this limitation with the early monitors, the DNDO sponsored the development of a next-generation technology, known as the advanced spectroscopic portal monitor. These monitors, now undergoing testing, could eliminate or reduce the need for the handheld radioactive devices. The 2006 project execution plan calls for the nuclear detection office to deploy several variations of the advanced spectroscopic portal monitors to screen cargo arriving by ship, rail and truck.

But officials in the nuclear detection office told GAO in October 2007 that the deployment strategy had been revised and only monitors to screen standard commercial trucks would be purchased. Yet, despite repeated requests from GAO, the nuclear detection office did not provide an updated plan documenting new schedule and funding requirements until July 2008, when agency officials provided auditors with a one-page spreadsheet of summary information regarding new equipment quantities and costs.

The spreadsheet summary did not provide detailed information requested by GAO, nor was it signed by any official. In GAO's view, "Estimates of any program's costs must be based on the agency's documented program." "Agency officials acknowledged the program requirements that would have been fulfilled by the discontinued [advanced spectroscopic portal] monitors remain valid, including screening rail cars, airport cargo and cargo at seaport terminals, but the agency has no current plans for how such screening will be accomplished," GAO wrote.

In August, a senior official at the nuclear detection office told GAO the deployment strategy could change again substantially depending on the results of ongoing equipment testing, thereby making it all but impossible to reasonably estimate program costs. If the nuclear detection office does try to implement the 2006 program execution plan -- the only plan on record -- GAO estimates a \$1.6 billion funding shortfall. The agency would have to cut the program or request more money from Congress to make up the deficit. The decision to eliminate additional portals for examining rail and sea cargo could reflect an effort to trim costs, auditors concluded, noting that, "In either case, the Congress will not be getting the radiation portal monitor program it initially approved."

Also troubling to GAO was what auditors perceived as hindrance from the agency in conducting its assessment. DNDO officials informed contractors that all information requests from GAO and corresponding data from companies must go through the agency before being submitted to GAO, and that agency officials must be present during interviews with GAO. So contentious were the discussions that GAO canceled one interview after repeated interruptions by DNDO officials. "DNDO merely requested the opportunity to participate in contractor interviews, and that all data provided by the contractors be provided through DNDO so that DNDO could ensure that the data was current and accurate," Levine said.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee plans to hold a hearing on the issue on Sept. 25. Scheduled to testify are Vayl Oxford, director of the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office and Thomas Winkowski, assistant commissioner at Customs and Border Protection's Office of Field Operations. The hearing is titled "Preventing Nuclear Terrorism: Hard Lessons Learned From Troubled Investments."

http://www.govexec.com/story_page_pf.cfm?articleid=41038&printerfriendlyvers=1

For the briefing materials see: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d081108r.pdf>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

FederalNewsRadio.com
September 24, 2008

DHS Wants to Keep Cyber Role

Robert Jamison wants it to be known: the Homeland Security Department is the appropriate place for the government's cybersecurity oversight and policy coordination. The Under Secretary for the National Protection and Programs Directorate at DHS says taking this responsibility away now would be a mistake.

The Commission on Cyber Security for the 44th presidency will recommend in November that the next administration give the White House the responsibility to oversee and coordinate the policy around federal and military network defense.

Jamison, who spoke to FederalNewsRadio via phone, says DHS recognizes the changing and more complex threats agencies face. "This is the first time we have a consolidated interagency strategy," he says. "We have real momentum. We don't want to restructure programs or the reporting structure while we are making progress." Jamison says DHS is doing many of the things the Government Accountability Office and other critics say they need to do. This includes expanding the cybersecurity budget, better information sharing across government and with the private sector and better analytical capabilities.

Jamison offered some examples of what the department is doing in each of these areas. For instance, DHS is testing the second version of its Einstein federal intrusion protection software. Einstein 2 will give agencies and DHS real-time analysis of network traffic as well as improved intrusion protection capabilities.

"All agencies will have a comprehensive intrusion protection system," he says. "And we will be able to program the capabilities with a broader knowledge of interagency trends." Einstein 2 also will let DHS look for anomalies in Internet traffic. "We will strictly scan for malicious code," Jamison says. "We will not be at the individual page levels." DHS has deployed Einstein 2 in a test environment and still is working out the protocols, procedures and policies, he adds.

In the next month or so, DHS will deploy the software at five agencies. Jamison says the department will see how it goes and begin deploying Einstein 2 across the rest of government over the next year.

Another example of what DHS is doing is Project 12. Jamison says Project 12 is aimed to improve federal government communication with private industry. "What can we do to break down barriers to get more situation awareness from the private sector?" he asks. "There are some hurdles and concerns about sharing vulnerabilities that we will have to deal with." Jamison says over the next few months DHS and industry representatives will detail a plan to improve these efforts.

DHS also is working with the White House and other agencies on a federal deterrent strategy. Jamison would not offer too many details of the plan, citing the classified nature of the subject. "We need to have a more consistent policy across the federal government," he says. "We are concerned about the frequency of cyber intrusions on federal networks and the fact they are becoming more complex." Jamison adds that it is too early to say whether the strategy would ever become public.

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/?nid=169&sid=1484118>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Government Computer News (GCN.com)
September 23, 2008

U.S. Tops List as Source for Botnet Attacks

By William Jackson

The United States was the top source of distributed attack traffic, originating nearly three times as many attacks as second-place China, according to a recent study by security service provider SecureWorks Inc. The figures are based on identified attacks attempted against the company's 2,000 customers so far in 2008. The bad guys launching the attacks were not always based in this country, but they used compromised computers in the United States to form botnets as platforms for the attacks.

According to SecureWorks, 20.6 million attacks originated from U.S. computers and 7.7 million from Chinese computers. "It clearly shows that the United States and China have a lot of vulnerable computers that have been compromised and are being used as bots to launch cyberattacks," said Hunter King, a security researcher at SecureWorks. "This should be a warning to organizations and personal computer users that not only are they putting

their own computers and networks at risk by not securing them, they are providing these cybercriminals with a platform from which to compromise other computers.”

The rest of the top 10 sources of attack traffic were:

- Brazil with 166,987.
- South Korea with 162,289 attempted attacks.
- Poland with 153,205.
- Japan with 142,346.
- Russia with 130,572.
- Taiwan with 124,997.
- Germany with 110,493.
- Canada with 107,483.

The vulnerabilities exploited to compromise botnet computers do not necessarily have anything to do with the attacks launched from them. Once compromised, computers can be updated with malicious code and instructions for sending spam or other attack traffic.

Because the attacks can make use of address lists on compromised computers, malicious code can appear to come from trusted sources, which makes it difficult to screen e-mail traffic by address. Computers can also be compromised by malicious code hosted on legitimate Web sites and in third-party applications.

The ability of botnet activities to cross national borders complicates the job of blocking hostile traffic, said Don Jackson, director of threat intelligence at SecureWorks. “The Georgia/Russia cyber conflict was a perfect example of this,” Jackson said. “Many of the Georgian [information technology] staff members thought that by blocking Russian IP addresses they would be able to protect their networks. However, many of the Russian attacks were actually launched from IP addresses in Turkey and the United States, so consequently they were hit hard.”

Hacking patterns in China appear to differ from those in other countries, Jackson said. Although hackers still assemble distributed networks of computers, they tend to use entire networks they control with the help of insiders at schools, data centers and companies. But the technique of wholesale compromise is not unique to China, he added. “We also see many local hacker groups in Japan and Poland compromise hosts within their own country to use in cyberattacks, so the Chinese hackers are not alone in using resources within their own borders.”

In addition to keeping up-to-date with security protocols, administrators can seek protection by using security services that block traffic from known or suspected malicious sources. They can also monitor outgoing network traffic to detect suspicious activity from computers that have been compromised.

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http://www.gcn.com/cgi-bin/udt/im.display.printable?client.id=gcn_daily&story.id=47200

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

NextGov.com
September 24, 2008

Commandant Exhorts: Figure Out Facebook

By Anne Laurent

The message couldn't be clearer: Coasties need to start social networking, right now! Yesterday on YouTube, in his firm, ramrod straight-arrow style, Coast Guard Commandant Thad Allen ordered his entire service, and especially its leaders, to get into Web 2.0, double time. See it here first:

"We're going to see very shortly in the Coast guard a revolution on how we deal with information management in the new social media, or as some people would call it the Web 2.0," Allen announced. "We need to understand that

this is a permanent feature of our environment and we need to understand how to operate in it." "It's critically important that senior leaders in the United States Coast Guard understand what technology is doing today, how it is changing, how we must change with it."

Allen apparently has been on Facebook for several months. He announced an upcoming series of messages from senior Coasties about what he called "social media Web 2.0." The CIO will talk about infrastructure and technologies. Public Affairs staff will address policies regarding content both in official statements and in how Coasties interact with their leadership.

He emphasized that in all communications, internal, with the public and among one another, Coasties must adhere to what he called "the guardian ethos," developed during his term at the helm. Regarding social networking, Allen said, "We need to take care of each other, watch our backs and watch our people." Ironically, Allen's Web 2.0 dictum came as he declared bloggers are not legitimate news media outlets. According to Wired magazine's "Danger Room" blog, that's part of the reason the Coast Guard denied Freedom of Information Act requests from two of them. Allen's blogger comments came, surprisingly, during a Sept. 22 bloggers roundtable teleconference. Coast Guard-focused bloggers have been seeking test results from the new National Security Cutter Bertholf.

Allen's not alone in exhorting federal officialdom to wake up and get connected. Bob Gourley, former chief technology officer at the Defense Intelligence Agency, wants CTOs to get with it, too. "Get engaged in social media (if you are not already). That means Facebook, Plaxo, LinkedIn, and Twitter (especially Twitter-- it really changes your mind)," he writes on his blog, CTO Vision, in a Sept. 17 post entitled, ominously, "Is Your CTO Making You Stupid? (The blog's very good, BTW, especially for Nextgov readers.)"

So, if you think wikis and blogs and Facebook and MySpace and virtual worlds are all just momentary fads you can ignore, probably best to start thinking again. Or even changing your mind. Or maybe dipping in a toe. Fast.

http://techinsider.nextgov.com/2008/09/commandant_to_coast_guard_lead.php

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Aljazeera.net

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

US: North Korea talks not dead

North Korean moves to restart its main nuclear reactor do not mean international efforts to disarm the country are unravelling, the chief US negotiator to six-nation talks has said. Speaking to reporters in New York on Monday Christopher Hill admitted the process to get Pyongyang to denuclearise "has had its difficult moments in the past and we're certainly experiencing another one now". But he said Pyongyang's actions were part of "the rough and tumble" of negotiations and dismissed suggestions that talks were dead. "They've been staking out some very tough negotiating positions ... so yes the negotiating process does continue," Hill said. "Clearly we're seeing a tough line from them in the last month."

North Korea, which tested an atomic weapon in October 2006, began disabling its ageing reactor and other plants at Yongbyon last November under a pact with South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. But it announced last month that it had halted work in protest against Washington's refusal to drop it from its blacklist of alleged state sponsors of terrorism, as promised under the deal.

Washington says the North must first accept strict outside verification of the nuclear inventory that Pyongyang handed over in June. Hill said North Korea must agree to verification steps but acknowledged that the North Koreans may find it difficult to accept such an intrusive process. "It's a tough process, it's not about what you write on a piece of paper, it's about what you do on the ground, it's about going into nuclear facilities in a way that we haven't done before," he said.

Removing IAEA seals

North Korea confirmed on Friday that it was working to restart its plutonium-producing reactor and the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Monday that Pyongyang had asked it to remove seals and surveillance equipment from the complex.

Hill declined to comment on the IAEA report but expressed doubts that North Korea could quickly get the site going again, saying it could take months to reactivate the reprocessing plant and more than a year for the whole reactor complex. "I don't think there is any immediate potential for restarting the thing," he said.

Hill's remarks came a day after George Bush, the US president, expressed concern to his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao on Sunday over North Korea's plans. "The two presidents agreed that they would work hard to convince the North to continue down the path established in the six-party talks toward denuclearisation," Gordon Johndroe, a White House spokesman, said.

The Bush administration is trying in its waning months in office to salvage the effort to get North Korea to give up its nuclear arms. Hill said Condoleezza Rice, the US secretary of state, "had a wide-ranging good discussion" with Yu Myung-hwan, the South Korean foreign minister, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York and that she would meet other participants from the six-party process during the week.

Sources: Agencies

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia-pacific/2008/09/20089234504589879.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Reuters UK

China urges "flexibility" on North Korea nuclear moves

Tuesday, 23 September 2008

BEIJING (Reuters) - China urged "flexibility" in the North Korean nuclear dispute on Tuesday, avoiding harsh words a day after Pyongyang made fresh moves towards possibly restarting a nuclear complex at the heart of the dispute.

On Monday, North Korea asked the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog to remove seals and cameras from its main atomic facility, Yongbyon.

The North said on Friday it was working to reactivate the plutonium-making Yongbyon complex, the basis of the atomic bomb programme it had been dismantling since last November under a disarmament-for-aid deal.

Beijing has hosted the six-party talks, which produced that deal, and has acted as an intermediary between the United States and North Korea, which is heavily dependent on aid from its communist neighbour.

China's response to Pyongyang's latest moves was characteristically cautious. "Under the present circumstances, we hope the concerned parties enhance contacts and show flexibility, and together make efforts to resolve the salient problems as soon as possible," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a regular news conference.

Restarting Yongbyon would be difficult and time-consuming for North Korea, struggling in poverty and isolation. Diplomats and experts have said the moves to restart it are more a negotiating or stalling tactic than a pressing threat.

China has hosted the six-way talks since 2003 and generally avoids harsh words against the North. South Korea, the United States, Japan and Russia also participate in the stop-start negotiations.

(Reporting by Ben Blanchard; Editing by Ken Wills and Alex Richardson)

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKTRE48M4L920080923>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Unease Grows As N. Korea Asks To Remove IAEA Seals From Reactor

By Karen DeYoung, Washington Post Staff Writer

North Korea asked international nuclear inspectors yesterday to remove surveillance cameras and seals from the deactivated reactor at Yongbyon, amid rising concerns that the diplomatic deal to dismantle the country's nuclear weapons program might be unraveling.

The North Koreans requested the removal "to enable them to carry out tests at the reprocessing plant, which they say will not involve nuclear material," Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the 35-member IAEA board in Vienna. Although the reactor remains shut, he said, some equipment that had been removed "has been brought back" after North Korea announced Friday that it was making "preparations" to restart it.

Bush administration officials struggled yesterday to balance their unease over North Korea's actions with optimism that ongoing diplomatic efforts would succeed in keeping the 2007 deal alive.

"The six-party process has had its difficult moments in the past, and we are certainly having one now," chief U.S. negotiator Christopher R. Hill said. Because it would take time to restart the reactor, he said, "we have time -- time ahead to continue to work this issue. We don't expect any dramatic developments in a matter of days. . . . But clearly it's a difficult moment . . . and it's a time where we really are going to have to work very closely with our other partners."

Hill spoke in New York, where the five partners negotiating with North Korea -- the United States, China, South Korea, Japan and Russia -- are discussing the situation on the fringes of the U.N. General Assembly.

President Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao agreed in a telephone conversation Sunday "that they would work hard to convince the North to continue down the path" established by the agreement, White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had separate meetings in New York with her Chinese and South Korean counterparts on the issue.

South Korea indicated over the weekend that it would suspend promised aid to the North if efforts to rebuild the reactor continued. The Nelson Report, which closely monitors U.S. policy in Asia, said yesterday that Seoul had stopped delivery of 4,000 tons of steel pipe promised to North Korea. "The next step now comes from China," the report said, "if there is to be any concerted pressure" from the five partners.

North Korea's moves are the latest in a series of recent challenges to nonproliferation successes the administration hopes to claim as part of Bush's foreign policy legacy. Plans to impose a new round of sanctions against Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons program are stymied at the United Nations.

ElBaradei said yesterday that the IAEA "has not been able to make substantive progress" on answering questions about "possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear program. These remain of serious concern," he said. Iran says its program is designed only to produce nuclear power and denies Western charges of a clandestine weapons program.

Two weeks ago, Rice mentioned the administration's diplomacy on Iran and North Korea as evidence that it would leave the nuclear nonproliferation issue "in far better shape than we found it."

North Korea's program, frozen under a 1994 agreement with the Clinton administration, was restarted in 2002 after the Bush administration accused Pyongyang of violating the terms of the accord. Pyongyang then reactivated the Yongbyon reactor and produced enough plutonium for a half-dozen weapons. In 2006, it exploded a small nuclear device.

Last year, a deal was struck between North Korea and the five partners in which Pyongyang agreed to dismantle its weapons program in exchange for diplomatic concessions and energy assistance. In June, North Korea turned over a

60-page declaration that included details of its plutonium production and blew up the cooling tower at the shuttered Yongbyon facility.

The Bush administration, whose senior ranks have long been divided over how tough to be on North Korea, said it needed to verify the assertions in the declaration. When it let slide the August date for removing Pyongyang from a terrorist list -- which bans defense sales and restricts trade, foreign aid and financial transactions -- the North Koreans announced they were suspending the dismantlement of the reactor and said last week that they were preparing to restart it.

On Friday, North Korea's state-run news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that the government did not care whether it would be delisted and warned the United States not to treat it like Iraq. Experts noted that North Korea has not yet done anything irreversible and that its step-by-step behavior appears to have left the door open. "It's all designed to send a message to the United States that if you don't live up to the deal, we will go back to the nuclear program, as opposed to 'the deal is dead,' " said Joseph Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund.

But "the deal is clearly unraveling," he said. "The thing that worries me is that I don't see anything that's going to stop this."

Staff writer Michael Abramowitz at the United Nations contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/22/AR2008092202879.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times
September 23, 2008
Pg. 1

Analysts Fear Pakistan Could Fall To Extremists

By Henry Chu, Times Staff Writer

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN -- More than any other terrorist attack in this volatile country, the devastating truck bombing of the Marriott Hotel over the weekend has presented government and military leaders here with a stark choice: Go all out against extremists or risk the nation's collapse into chaos. That is the growing consensus among many Pakistani analysts and commentators, who fear that without rapid, determined and ironfisted action by officials and security forces, this nuclear-armed land is in danger of becoming a failed state, with Islamic radicals in control.

On Monday, the government described just how close those militants may have come to dealing Pakistan an almost fatal blow. A senior official said that President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani and top Cabinet members were supposed to dine together at the Marriott on Saturday night -- but switched venues just before the bombing. "At the eleventh hour, the president and prime minister decided that the venue would be the prime minister's house," Rehman Malik, the Interior Ministry's top official, told reporters. "It saved the entire leadership."

Malik did not explain what inspired the change in plans. A representative of the hotel later cast doubt on the statement, telling the Associated Press that there were no plans for a government dinner at the Marriott on Saturday. Malik's disclosure, if true, betrayed the alarming extent to which militants have beefed up their intelligence capabilities and upgraded their planning and operations accordingly. Local media reported that Gilani would hold an emergency meeting today to discuss tightening security to prevent more attacks like Saturday's.

The suicide bombing of the Marriott, an icon of social and political wheeling and dealing here in the Pakistani capital, killed 53 people, including at least two Americans, and wounded more than 250. The U.S. Central Command on Monday identified one of the slain Americans as Air Force Maj. Rodolfo I. Rodriguez, 34, of El Paso. The name of the other had not yet been released. Robert S. Prucha, deputy director of public affairs for the Central Command, said a number of other members of the U.S. military were at the hotel and suffered minor scrapes and cuts. None required hospitalization, he said.

No verifiable claim of responsibility has surfaced, although a shadowy group called Fedayeen Islam told Al Arabiya television that it was behind the attack. From the ferocity and size of the bombing, suspicion has fallen on Al Qaeda and a movement known as the Pakistani Taliban.

The descent into violence and fear here has been sharp. In a country where suicide bombings were relatively rare five years ago, more than 300 people have been killed in such attacks this year. What seemed at first to be a threat confined to the nation's fringes, in the rugged and uncontrollable border and tribal areas, has now penetrated urban centers, including the very heart of this leafy, broad-avenued capital.

The violence gripping the nation continued Monday with the kidnapping of a top foreign diplomat in the city of Peshawar, in Pakistan's tribal belt. Abdul Khaliq Farahi, the Afghan consul general there, who was to become Kabul's ambassador to Islamabad in the next few days, was abducted on his way home from the consulate Monday afternoon by gunmen who shot and killed his driver. No word has been received from the kidnappers, said Majnoon Gulab, the deputy Afghan ambassador.

In recent weeks, the Pakistani army has stepped up its campaign against militancy in mountainous areas near the border with Afghanistan, such as in the Bajaur region, and in the Swat valley. The military says it has inflicted severe losses on the extremists, including a dozen who were killed in Swat on Monday. At the same time, a suicide bombing killed eight people in the area.

The bombing of the Marriott may have been in retaliation for the military campaign, as well as a general strike against the government of Zardari, the newly elected president and widower of assassinated former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Zardari had delivered his maiden address to lawmakers just hours before. But he and his predecessor, Pervez Musharraf, have also shown a willingness to negotiate and declare truces with insurgents, perhaps in a nod to the many Pakistanis who denounce the government for targeting its own people and who view the crackdown as America's proxy war.

The attack on the Marriott, most of whose victims were Pakistanis, and the fact that it may have been a mass assassination attempt ought to remove any doubt in the minds of the public and dissenting officials that the country is facing an existential threat, said analyst Mahmood Shah, a retired general who was head of security in the militant-ridden tribal areas. "There is no more room for any wavering. There is no more time left," Shah said. "These extremists want to capture power in Pakistan. . . . There shouldn't be any soft-pedaling of this whole issue."

Analysts say the government must create a comprehensive strategy for pacifying Pakistan's tribal belt -- not just militarily, but with economic incentives and measures for installing a government in what is a largely lawless place. "The military operation is not an end in itself. You seize territory, but you have to make sure you know what you want to achieve there," said analyst Talat Masood, also a retired general. "As of now, there seems to be a lot of ambiguity as to what they want to achieve. "Naturally, you want a political engagement with those who are prepared to work with the government, and you need to reestablish the writ of the state. Like in Bajaur, where we are fighting now: Are you genuinely doing that, or is it just talk?" Masood said. "It has to be sustained over a period of not days, months, but years."

He and others acknowledge that opponents of striking hard against extremism have succeeded in portraying the fight as one of Washington's making, carried out by an all-too-pliant Pakistani government. That sentiment can be heard not just in tea shops and living rooms, but also in the barracks, among Pakistan's junior officers and troops. "Their thinking is that this is an American war, at least some of them," Masood said. "For the military, it's a very difficult task to fight your own people. And for the military to fight counterinsurgency is the worst, because they're not trained for that."

The News, one of Pakistan's biggest English-language newspapers, said in an editorial Monday: "We must wake up to the fact that these people come from amongst us; they target venues within the country and they kill their own countrymen. "It is time we accepted this war is our own. . . . There must be a consensus across society about the need to act with unity and determination to save what still remains of our wounded country," it said.

Just days into his presidency, Zardari is under pressure from all sides to try to make Pakistan more secure. Some voices still blame the government for working so closely with the United States and provoking a backlash from Islamic radicals; others accuse the government of dithering and not cracking down hard enough.

"The great fear is that Pakistan is past the point of no return when it comes to being able to cope with these threats from within," said Stephen Cohen, an expert on South Asia at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "When you look at other countries with these kinds of movements, it's a long battle, a 10- to 15-year battle."

Zardari is to meet with President Bush in New York today for a previously scheduled talk on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly meeting. They are expected to discuss recent incursions by U.S. troops into Pakistan from Afghanistan, which Zardari and other officials say violate Pakistan's sovereignty.

The bombing of the Marriott has cast a shadow over the meeting, and over all of Pakistan, which now must fully commit to stamping out extremism within its borders, said analyst Masood. "It was a wake-up call for the [entire] country," he said. "It was an extraordinary explosion, in the sense that it was so severe, and I have a feeling that if they haven't even woken up after this, then God alone knows when they will."

Times staff writer Julian E. Barnes in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-pakistan23-2008sep23,0,5620170.story>

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-pakistan23-2008sep23,0,5620170.story?page=2>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Aerospace Daily & Defense Report

September 23, 2008

Pg. 6

USAF Recommends Nuke Management Changes At Summit

The U.S. Air Force has taken a step toward fixing its beleaguered nuclear enterprise, putting forward a number of recommendations at a so-called nuclear summit in Washington, D.C., Sept. 18. Air Force leadership, including Acting Secretary Michael Donley and Gen. Norton Schwartz, the new chief of staff, met to push ahead with addressing concerns outlined in the Office of the Secretary of Defense's Nuclear Weapons Management report unveiled by an OSD-commissioned task force Sept. 16. One hundred eighty corrective actions, costing up to \$1.5 billion, were detailed in the report, including the possibility of redesignating Air Force Space Command as Air Force Strategic Command (AFSTRAT), which would have singular responsibility for the nuclear mission (Aerospace DAILY, Sept. 16).

Among the decisions made at the nuclear summit:

*An expanded Nuclear Weapons Center (NWC) will be responsible for all nuclear sustainment, clearing up previously ambiguous chains of command; and NWC will handle all sustaining activities inside continental U.S. weapon storage areas;

*USAF will establish a stronger, more centralized inspection process built upon common policies and procedures effectively integrated with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA);

*The service will consolidate and expand lead-in and follow-on, mission-specific training within Air Education and Training Command for security personnel assigned to nuclear duties;

* There will be a new Headquarters Air Force (HAF) staff office, split out from the existing HAF office, to provide singular focus on nuclear matters in the armed service's headquarters.

Final decisions on other issues are expected at the upcoming CORONA conference, an annual high-level Air Force leadership summit.

-- Bettina H. Chavanne

*******See Article at URL Site:**

<http://www.military-quotes.com/forum/usaf-recommends-nuke-management-changes-t67633.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

TIME

September 22, 2008

Why the Car Bomb Is a Terrorist's Best Weapon

By Robert Baer

[The attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad](#) should tell us a couple of things: For a start, no one and nothing is safe from a car bomb. Or, as in the Marriott's case, a truck bomb. As hotels go, the Marriott was a fortress. It had fairly good "standoff" — the distance between it and the street; luggage and guests were X-rayed before entering; the hotel was located in one of the best policed capitals in the world. The only thing that could have been done to make the Marriott even safer was to have completely shut down Islamabad's traffic — something obviously not practical. Pakistan is as dependent on the internal combustion engine as any other city.

Pakistan's new president Asif Zardari was supposed to have been dining at the Marriott when the bomb went off, but had decided at the last minute to eat at the prime minister's house. Had he kept to his original dinner plans, he could very well have been killed, pushing Pakistan closer to total and uncontrollable chaos. By the way, there is a fairly good argument that car bombs are what keep the world's leaders from getting out and walking around, leaving them physically isolated.

In an address to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council last week, CIA Director Michael Hayden said that al Qaeda's obtaining a nuclear weapon is the CIA's deepest fear. While he was right in the sense that bin Laden potentially could again kill thousands of Americans, it's a worst case terrorist scenario and not the most likely one. The Marriott bombing reminded us once again that it is the common, everyday weapon we should be most afraid of. The 9/11 hijackers took over four airplanes with box cutters.

Earlier this year, for a British documentary, I spent a month traveling around the Middle East and Europe interviewing car bombers, collectively some of the greatest mass murderers of the 20th century. What I came away with is the certainty that the car bomb is unstoppable. It is detectable only if every car moving around a city is stopped and inspected, which obviously can't be done.

And car bombs can change the course of history. Many believe that the IRA's 1993 truck bomb attack in in Bishopsgate, the center of London's financial district, helped convince Britain to seek a political settlement with the IRA. In 2005, a former Lebanese prime minister in 2005 was killed by a car bomb that provoked a cascade of events that led to Hizballah becoming the de facto sovereign authority in Lebanon. Or, on a happier side, the sharp drop off in car-bombs in Iraq has averted a civil war. And the Oklahoma City truck bombing effectively destroyed the right wing insurgency Tim McVeigh wanted to rally.

No doubt al-Qaeda will be blamed for the Marriott attack, with the implication that only an experienced terrorist group could have carried it out. But just about anyone can make a car bomb. Designs are available on the Internet. Karl Armstrong, the man who blew up a University of Wisconsin building in 1970, found the formula for his fertilizer car bomb in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

Whatever the fall out is from the Marriott bombing, it may be a nuclear bomb in the hands of terrorists that keeps the CIA awake at night, but it should be that eighteen-wheeler truck that doesn't look any different from all the others.

Robert Baer, a former CIA field officer assigned to the Middle East, is TIME.com's intelligence columnist and the author of See No Evil and, most recently, the novel Blow the House Down

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1843328,00.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer
September 24, 2008; Page A16

Gates Is Pessimistic On Pakistani Support

By Ann Scott Tyson

[Pakistan's](#) leaders and military cannot publicly support U.S. cross-border operations against militant groups in Pakistan's western tribal areas, but such strikes are needed to protect American troops in [Afghanistan](#) and defend the United States against its gravest terrorist threat, [Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates](#) said yesterday.

"We will do what is necessary to protect our troops," Gates told the [Senate Armed Services Committee](#). Asked whether Pakistan's government would back unilateral [U.S. military](#) operations into Pakistan, he said: "I don't think they can do that."

Gates said that despite a growing insurgency in Afghanistan, fueled by fighters from Pakistan, the spring of 2009 is the earliest [the Pentagon](#) would be able to send as many as three more U.S. combat brigades there to meet a request of American commanders for about 10,000 more troops. "I believe we will be able to meet that commanders' requirement, but in the spring and summer of 2009," Gates said.

Western Pakistan has surpassed Afghanistan and [Iraq](#) as the base for [al-Qaeda](#) and other Islamist extremist groups that now pose the biggest terrorist threat to the United States, Gates said. "If you ask me today, after the successes that we've had against [al-Qaeda in Iraq](#), where the greatest threat to the homeland lies, I would tell you it's in western Pakistan," he said. Moreover, fighters flowing across the border from Pakistan account for about 30 to 40 percent of the attacks in Afghanistan, Marine Gen. James E. Cartwright, vice chairman of the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), told the committee.

Gates said he hoped for greater cooperation with Pakistan's new government against militant groups that also are escalating attacks within Pakistan, such as the bombing of the [Marriott Hotel](#) in Islamabad on Saturday that killed more than 50 people.

U.S. officials denied a report yesterday that Pakistani troops and tribesmen had shot down an American drone near the Afghan border. Gates acknowledged that the United States and Pakistan have fundamental differences in how they define their foe. For example, he said, while Pakistani officials oppose the presence of al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters, they have had long-term relationships with insurgent groups founded by [Taliban](#) leaders [Jalaluddin Haqqani](#) and [Gulbuddin Hekmatyar](#), and "they don't, in many respects, see the Taliban as their enemy," he said. "Frankly, I think one of the keys in terms of expanding our cooperation with the Pakistanis is identifying common threats," he said. "They do not see some of these groups in the same way we do."

Committee Chairman [Sen. Carl M. Levin \(D-Mich.\)](#) and ranking [Republican Sen. John W. Warner](#) (Va.) voiced concern over strains in U.S.-Pakistani relations as a result of the U.S. cross-border strikes. They noted that about 80 percent of the cargo and 40 percent of the fuel for U.S. troops in Afghanistan flow through Pakistan. Concerned that those supply lines could be cut off, the Pentagon began this month testing alternative routes for getting materials into landlocked Afghanistan, Cartwright said.

Pressed by lawmakers to make Afghanistan a higher priority, Gates said that based on current demands in Iraq, "we do not have the forces to send three additional combat brigades to Afghanistan at this point" without extending war-zone tours for troops.

Moreover, Gates said, dispatching large numbers of American and other Western troops may not be the best answer to rising violence in Afghanistan, which "has never been hospitable to foreigners." An alternative would be to make expanding Afghan forces a higher priority, he said. The United States is supporting a plan to double the size of the Afghan army from about 60,000 to 120,000, with 12,000 more soldiers in training, over the next five years.

The size of the U.S. force in Afghanistan has increased from fewer than 21,000 troops two years ago to more than 31,000 today, but senior commanders there say their efforts remain hampered by a shortage of adequate ground forces, helicopters and other equipment.

Gates said he expected that as U.S. force levels increase, the contingent of 30,000 troops from [NATO](#) allies and other countries is unlikely to grow much.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/23/AR2008092300091.html?hpid=sec-nation>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Boston Globe
September 25, 2008

EU: Iran Close To Nuclear Arms Ability

Refusal to freeze enrichment key

By George Jahn, Associated Press

VIENNA -- Iran is nearing the ability to arm a nuclear warhead even if it insists its atomic activities are peaceful, the European Union warned yesterday. In comments prepared for delivery to the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35 board members, the EU also asserted that Iran appeared to have had a past nuclear arms program despite its denials.

The statement was made available to reporters as the meeting turned its attention on Iran's nuclear defiance on its third day. The main international concerns focus on the country's refusal to freeze uranium enrichment despite three UN Security Council sanctions and its blocking of IAEA attempts to follow up on intelligence suggesting it was developing a nuclear arms program until several years ago.

Iran insists its nuclear activities are geared only toward generating power. But Israel says the Islamic Republic could have enough nuclear material to make its first bomb within a year. The United States estimates Iran is at least two years away from that stage, and some experts say the country could reach that stage in as little as 6 months through uranium enrichment.

An IAEA report says Iran has increased the number of centrifuges used to process uranium to nearly 4,000 from 3,000 just a few months ago.

But David Albright, whose Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security closely tracks suspect secret proliferators, has also been able to extrapolate other information from the report. Iran, he says, has managed to iron out most of the bugs in the intensely complicated process of enrichment that often saw the centrifuges breaking down. That, he says means, they can produce more enriched uranium faster. And while the IAEA says the machines have spewed out only low-enriched material suitable solely for nuclear fuel, producing enough of that can make it easy to "break out" quickly by reprocessing it to weapons-grade uranium.

To date, Iran has produced nearly 1,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium, said the report - close to what Albright says is the 1,500-pound minimum needed to produce the 45-60 pounds needed for a simple nuclear bomb under optimal conditions. And with Iran's centrifuges running ever more smoothly, it "is progressing toward this capability and can be expected to reach it in six months to two years," says Albright.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/articles/2008/09/25/eu_iran_close_to_nuclear_arms_ability/

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

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September 26, 2008

Pg. 19

Air Force, Army Discipline 17 for Improper Fuse Shipment

By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Air Force yesterday announced disciplinary actions against 15 officers -- six generals and nine colonels -- in connection with the mistaken shipment of four nuclear missile fuses to Taiwan in 2006, while the Army said it counseled two generals who had oversight of part of the faulty supply system.

One of the most severe punishments was a letter of reprimand sent to Air Force Lt. Gen. Kevin J. Sullivan, Air Force deputy chief of staff for logistics, for his failure to act to correct "systemic issues in ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] logistics," according to an Air Force statement. Letters of reprimand must be put in officers' personnel files as unfavorable information. Sullivan has requested retirement, the statement said.

Five other Air Force generals received less-severe letters of admonishment, which can be placed in their files and have "significant adverse effects on an officer's career," according to the Air Force. Those officers were Lt. Gen.

Michael A. Hamel and Brig. Gen. Francis M. Bruno, who had previously requested retirement; Brig. Gen. Arthur B. Cameron III, who had been reassigned, unrelated to the incident; and Maj. Gens. Roger W. Burg and Kathleen D. Close, who will remain in command because the Air Force leadership determined that their skills are needed to "restore effective stewardship of the ICBM force." Of the colonels, five received letters of reprimand, three letters of admonishment and one a letter of counsel.

"These actions are administrative in nature but can carry with them substantial consequences for the careers of these officers, including their potential to command, to be promoted or to retire in their current grade," acting Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley said at a Pentagon news briefing. "We recognize the years of dedicated service that these officers have given, but we cannot ignore the breaches of trust that have occurred on their watch," he said.

Still, the Air Force chief of staff, Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, said some of the officers are being allowed to continue to serve because "they have unique skills" necessary for the nuclear weapons mission. Nevertheless, he warned: "They certainly are on notice that there is no room for error here and that, should they abuse this trust, it won't take but about a millisecond to react."

The two Army officers, Brig. Gens. Lynn A. Collyar and Michael J. Lally III, received nondisciplinary memorandums of concern. Both had commanded the Defense Distribution Center, which at certain times had responsibility for the misdirected boxes containing the nuclear missile fuses. The Army said that it had counseled the officers but that the action would not impact their careers and both continue to serve "with distinction."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/25/AR2008092504549.html?nav=rss_world

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post.Com

Friday, September 26, 2008; 9:23 AM

Two Terrorism Suspects Arrested on KLM Flight

By Craig Whitlock

Washington Post Foreign Service

BERLIN, Sept. 26 -- Two Somali-born men who had left notes saying they were willing to sacrifice themselves for "jihad" were pulled off a flight at the Cologne airport Friday morning, moments before it was scheduled to depart for Amsterdam, German authorities said.

The pair had been under surveillance for months, the German newspaper Bild reported, citing unnamed police officials. Police officials said they moved to arrest the men after searching their apartments and finding notes suggesting that they intended to take part in a terrorist attack. Authorities identified the men as a 23-year-old Somali national and a 24-year-old German citizen born in Mogadishu. Officials did not immediately release their names or give other details of where they had been living prior to their arrests. "They are under suspicion of intending to participate in the jihad and in possible attacks," Frank Scheulen, a spokesman for police in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, told German television. "Farewell letters were written."

Police said they boarded KLM Flight 1804 at 6:55 a.m. local time, 10 minutes before it was scheduled to depart for Amsterdam. A KLM spokesman said all passengers were removed from the plane until police could locate luggage belonging to the suspects. The flight was allowed to depart after an 80-minute delay, airport officials said.

German counterterrorism officials have warned of a heightened risk of terrorism in the country, citing threats by Islamist groups over the presence of German troops in [Afghanistan](#). On Thursday, the federal prosecutor's office issued a public alert seeking information on the whereabouts of two terrorist suspects believed to have returned to [Germany](#) after attending militant training camps in [Pakistan](#). The two suspects, Eric Breininger, 21, and Houssain al Malla, 23, are suspected of involvement with a group called the Islamic Jihad Union that was accused of planning attacks against U.S. targets in Germany a year ago. German federal police officials said, however, that they did not believe the suspects named in the alert were connected with the men arrested at the Cologne airport Friday.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/26/AR2008092600431_pf.html

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)