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CQ.com

October 30, 2008

Democrats Cool to Nuclear Stockpile Modernization

By Josh Rogin, CQ Staff

The drive to modernize the nation's nuclear stockpile faces an uphill climb in Congress next year, as Democrats intend to hold off their support for the program for the time being. Defense-minded Democratic lawmakers in both chambers reacted cautiously to a new call from Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates for renewed support of the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, the Bush administration's effort to replace the aging Cold War nuclear stockpile. Since assuming the majority in 2007, Democrats have consistently cut requested funding for the program and they remain skeptical about its wisdom as opposed to other initiatives to maintain existing nuclear stores.

Gates, in an Oct. 28 speech at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, implored Congress to support the program. He framed it as a needed component of maintaining long-term nuclear deterrence against both rising powers and rogue states. "While we have a long-term goal of abolishing nuclear weapons once and for all, given the world in which we live, we have to be realistic about that proposition," Gates said. "The program would reinvigorate and rebuild our infrastructure and expertise, and it could potentially allow us to reduce aging stockpiles by balancing the risk between a smaller number of warheads and an industrial complex that could produce new weapons if the need arose."

Democrats have always been skeptical of the Bush administration's claim that building new nuclear warheads will allow the nation to actually reduce the size of the overall stockpile. They also see the program as another in a long line of Bush administration attempts to expand the variety of nuclear weapons and perhaps lower the threshold for their use. "I oppose RRW because after a number of classified briefings, I have come to the conclusion that it is essentially the production of a new nuclear weapon," reacted Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., an appropriator who has worked to slow the program over the last two years. "My views are not inviolate, but we know that the Bush administration's goal was to reopen the nuclear door." She and other Democrats in Congress have been successful in thwarting similar efforts, such as the development of lower yield nuclear weapons and other controversial devices, such as a nuclear "bunker buster" bomb. But Gates argued that the replacement warhead program is different from those initiatives.

"Let me be clear: The program we propose is not about new nuclear capabilities — suitcase bombs or bunker-busters or tactical nukes," he said. "It is about safety, security and reliability." The program began during Bush's first term and is managed by Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration. Funds also are requested annually in the Navy's research and development budget. Congress appropriated about \$85 million for the RRW program through fiscal 2008, but cut all requested funding — about \$33 million — for the program next year. The fiscal 2009 defense authorization bill (PL 110-417) redirected the funding towards other programs.

The defense section of the fiscal 2009 omnibus spending bill (PL 110-329) cleared by Congress in September eliminated the Navy's entire \$23 million of requested funding for the program. The remaining \$10 million was zeroed out in both the House and Senate versions of the fiscal 2009 energy and water appropriations bill, but that bill was never completed. Leading defense authorizers have held back a final decision on the program, awaiting more comprehensive independent analysis and the guidance of the next president.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has been supportive of research and analysis, but believes that more information is needed before a firm decision is made whether to pursue the program, his aide said. Many Democrats have left the door open while simultaneously halting immediate action.

"If we are going to maintain a smaller level of weapons as we work toward their elimination, and we have the opportunity to make them safer and more secure without testing, that is a proposal worth exploring," said Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher, chairwomen of the House Armed Services Strategic Forces subcommittee, which oversees the program.

Republicans in the New Mexico delegation, including outgoing Sen. Pete V. Domenici, R-N.M., have been vocal supporters, along with other conservatives who believe that by not acting, the United States is opening the door for nuclear competitors and adversaries.

"If the [United States] wants to avoid war — and we do — we must have an effective means to deter aggression against America and our allies," said Rep. Trent Franks, R-Ariz., a prominent member of Tauscher's subcommittee. "As history has demonstrated so often, weakness is provocative." Both presidential candidates have indicated they will take a cautious approach to moving ahead with the program.

Senator Barack Obama, D-Ill., has not weighed in on the program during the campaign, but is likely to wait for more information before making his decision. And while Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., largely agrees with Gates' call for robust nuclear deterrence, he acknowledges the risks and concerns associated with building new warheads under the program. "Senator McCain has made clear that he would only support the development of any new type of nuclear weapon that is absolutely essential for the viability of our deterrent, that results in making possible further decreases in the size of our nuclear arsenal, and that furthers our global nuclear security goals," said his top national security adviser, Randy Schuenemann.

The program also faces difficulty because it does not enjoy as much Republican support in Congress as some other strategic programs, such as ballistic missile defense, said John Isaacs, executive director of the Council for a Livable World. "For Republicans, missile defense is an ideological totem, and they will fight tooth and nail for that. But when it comes to RRW, it's just not the same," Isaacs said. There will be two major studies of nuclear weapons issue next year, one by the Pentagon and one by the independent commission headed by former secretaries of Defense William Perry and James Schlesinger. But in the end, the next president will set the agenda for the program, according to Isaacs, when he decides whether or not to ask for RRW money in his fiscal 2010 budget request. "The new president, no matter who he is, will take a look at all these issues," he said. "Either way, I would expect Congress to be resistant."

<http://www.cqpolitics.com/wmspage.cfm?parm1=5&docID=news-000002981167>

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Baltimore Sun
October 31, 2008

Iran Testing Process for Nuclear Program

VIENNA, Austria--Iran has recently tested ways of recovering highly enriched uranium from waste reactor fuel in a covert bid to expand its nuclear program, according to an intelligence assessment made available to the Associated Press. The intelligence, provided by a member of the 145-nation International Atomic Energy Agency, also says a report will soon be submitted to the Iranian leadership for a decision on whether to go ahead with the project. The alleged tests loosely replicate Saddam Hussein's attempts to build the bomb nearly two decades ago. But experts question the conclusion by those providing the intelligence that Tehran, too, is trying to reprocess the fuel to make a nuclear weapon.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/world/bal-te.briefs313oct31,0,7680399.story>

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Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty
November 04, 2008

Mr. President, Talk to Iran

by Mohammad Reza Kazemi

When the new U.S. president takes office in January, one of the key issues he'll find on his desk is the problem of Iran. One of the largest and most powerful countries in the Middle East and a leading energy producer, Iran has also presented a defiant challenge to Washington, particularly in its insistence on pursuing an advanced nuclear program.

Although the current U.S. administration has refused to remove the "military option" from the table, it seems clear that a war is in no one's interests -- not the U.S. taxpayers', not the overtaxed U.S. military's, not those of Iran's neighbors, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

There are some Iranians inside the country and abroad who are sick of the theocracy in Tehran and dream that if the United States attacks today, the country will be a democracy tomorrow. But the experiences of Iraq and Afghanistan reveal a different truth altogether. Democracy takes time. Military action will not resolve Iran's domestic issues.

And many experts argue that it will not resolve the standoff over the nuclear program either. Although a strike would set the program back, it would not end it. It would spread radioactive contamination and produce civilian casualties, but achieve little else. Tehran would certainly respond by leaving the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and ending all cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency. It would build new facilities without any international oversight or control.

Equally importantly, it would enflame anti-Western and anti-American sentiment across the country and rally many in Iran to support the government. After all, a significant portion of the Iranian people already support the nuclear program. Further, an attack would undermine the efforts of moderate and liberal politicians in Iran to push an agenda of international engagement and democratic reform.

Speak To Iran, All Of It

But this does not mean there is not a way forward. My advice to the new president is as follows:

First, end the saber-rattling and initiate direct talks with the Iranian authorities. In addition to formal talks, identify and seek contacts with people within the country who do not hold posts in the government, but nonetheless wield great authority. Use all means to reach them and persuade them of your willingness to hammer out a mutually acceptable compromise.

Second, you should realize that the majority of Iranian people bear no ill-will toward the United States, the West, or even Israel. An Iranian government that truly reflected the views of the majority of the population would seek to improve relations. A careful and nuanced approach to democracy promotion is needed in Iran, one that does not expect the immediate result of "regime change" but the long-term result of open civil society and healthy grassroots institutions. The path to achieving this is not simple, and direct financial support to activists is not always the best way to advance their efforts. In fact, under the current system, such aid can bring them no end of grief. In addition, you must avoid the pitfall of supporting groups that pretend to espouse liberal values but in fact are bent on establishing their own dictatorship in Iran.

Third, use economic and political sanctions and incentives to promote and encourage democratic change. Europe will support such efforts, and Tehran might well respond to offers of real engagement. Any other course would inevitably mean the United States would continue to stand alone and stymied.

Finally, I would stress the importance of boosting access to information and informed debate in Iran. The dictatorship there thrives because of its stranglehold on information and its ability to control and shape impressions and opinions. International broadcasting is one tool for expanding the terms of debate within Iran and arming moderates with the facts they need to change the system.

Mr. President, Iran is more open to you than you might think. And your ability to improve the situation in the region and the situation within Iran itself is greater than you might think.

Mohammad Reza Kazemi is a broadcaster with RFE/RL's Persian-language Radio Farda. The views expressed in this commentary are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of RFE/RL

<http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/1338318.html>

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Adnkronos International Pakistan

Pakistan: President Calls for US to Stop Drone Attacks

3 November 2008

Islamabad, 3 Nov. (AKI) - Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday called drone attacks on the country "counter-productive" and called for the raids to be stopped.

Zardari spelled out his concerns to the Commander, US Central Command, Gen. David Petraeus, and Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher at his official residence in Islamabad.

"Continuing drone attacks on our territory, which result in loss of precious lives and property, are counterproductive and difficult to explain by a democratically elected government. It is creating a credibility gap," he said.

Zardari said the raids should be stopped and the focus shifted to enhanced coordination and intelligence-sharing.

There is growing concern in the US about how Islamic militants are exploiting areas of Pakistan's rugged northwest region to support the growing insurgency in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Washington is suspected of conducting at least 17 missile strikes in Pakistan since August. In September, the US provoked outrage across the country when troops conducted a ground assault in a tribal region in Pakistan's northwest.

Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaq Pervaiz Kayani, Secretary Foreign Affairs Salman Bashir, US Ambassador Anne Patterson and senior military officials from both countries also attended the talks.

Zardari said that US leaders had affirmed their respect for Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, adding however that in the wake drone attacks on our side of the border the government was under pressure to react more aggressively.

<http://www.adnkronos.com/AKI/English/Security/?id=3.0.2663956249>

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Los Angeles Times
November 2, 2008

Some Israelis Feel an Urgency to Attack Iran

Officials say other nations quietly want Israel to act unilaterally against Tehran's nuclear ambitions. But an effective strike would be difficult and could stir up a wider conflict.

By Ashraf Khalil and Paul Richter

Reporting from Washington and Jerusalem — With international efforts to increase sanctions against Iran at a standstill, many Israelis believe their nation alone stands in the way of Tehran eventually building nuclear weapons.

But officials and analysts in Jerusalem also acknowledge that a unilateral attack is fraught with danger and might fail to cripple Iran's bomb-making abilities. Much of the international community quietly wants Israel to launch a strike, the officials say, but only if it can succeed.

"They will be very happy if we do their dirty work for them," said Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies at Bar-Ilan University near Tel Aviv. "The world is moving into 'What can we do about it?' mode. There is a strong instinct here to do it on our own."

To many in Israel, the situation is reminiscent of 1981, when the Jewish state acted on its own in bombing the Osirak reactor in Iraq, and last year, when it launched a unilateral strike on an alleged nuclear site in Syria.

A wild card in the equation is Israel's own political situation. With parliamentary elections on the horizon, no leader in Jerusalem is a dove on Iran.

Last month, the U.N. Security Council voted to extend sanctions on Iran, but failed to add new strictures. Immediately after, Israeli Cabinet minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer charged that "the world has resigned itself to the fact that Iran is going to be a nuclear power. . . . This means only one thing: that we have to look out for ourselves."

Patrick Clawson, a longtime Iran analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, believes an Israeli strike on Iran would be received with gratitude in some capitals, provided it works. "Success would have a thousand fathers," he said. "A lot of Arab countries would be pleased."

Several Sunni Arab governments, especially the Persian Gulf states, openly worry that a nuclear Iran, a predominantly Shiite Muslim nation, would extend its growing regional influence.

In Israel, the issue of whether to strike first against Iranian nuclear facilities remains a steady topic of debate.

"I don't know which direction this is going to go in Israel," said Emily Landau, director of arms control and regional security programs at the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israeli think tank.

Although the "pressure is rising" domestically toward undertaking a unilateral attack, public sentiment is still in flux, Landau said. It could "move in the direction of more and more people in Israel concluding that a nuclear Iran is not something we can stop."

Tehran has consistently said that its nuclear program is for peaceful power generation. And former U.S. and U.N. weapons inspector David Kay recently said in a speech that he thought it would be two to five years before Iran could produce enough fissile material for a bomb. A U.S. National Intelligence Estimate last year said it would be possible but "highly unlikely" for Tehran to reach that goal by the end of 2009.

But some in Israel see a narrow window in which to act.

"Time is running very, very short right now," said Ephraim Asculai, a former top official at the Israel Atomic Energy Commission who is now a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies.

U.S. officials fear that an attack would trigger violent repercussions, most notably a wider regional conflict that would inevitably force the entry of American troops. Navy Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has said he does not intend to get involved in another war when he has his hands full with Iraq and Afghanistan.

The global economic crisis only strengthens opposition. The ambassador of one Arab country predicted this week that the major powers would be unwilling to take any step that might drive the price of Iranian oil back up again.

An August report by the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington think tank that studies nuclear proliferation, said the dispersed nature of Iran's nuclear facilities and the still-sketchy Western intelligence made it impossible for a single airstrike to succeed. "It would need multiple strikes against many sites," the report concluded. "After such strikes, the attacker might still have little confidence that it had denied Iran the ability to produce weapon-grade uranium."

Within Israel, there are rising voices against a unilateral attack.

"We can't afford to lose wars here," said Meir Javedanfar, an Iranian-born Israeli analyst and director of Middle East Economic and Political Analysis Co.

Israel's military establishment knows that an effective strike would be difficult, Javedanfar said, and could prompt a large and multi-pronged Iranian retaliation against Israel and against U.S. troops in Iraq.

"They'll only support [an attack] if it would set Iran's nuclear program back at least five if not 10 years and they could restrain the Iranian retaliation. Then it's a viable option," Javedanfar said.

The U.N.'s failure to impose tougher penalties probably signaled the end of a final U.S. push against Iran before President Bush leaves office.

Although Russia and China approved an extension of the ban on arms sales to Iran and a partial freeze of its assets overseas, they opposed additional measures.

In September, the Bush administration stepped up economic pressure outside the U.N. framework, blacklisting Iran's national shipping line, eighteen of its affiliates and about 120 individual ships for allegedly cooperating with Tehran's nuclear and missile development.

And last month, the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions against the Export Development Bank of Iran, charging that the government bank was an instrument supporting the country's nuclear research program.

But in other ways, the level of activity and rhetoric from Washington has fallen noticeably in recent months.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in September that the U.S. continued to work with its allies to develop new ways to pressure Iran. But she did not promise that the group would complete the work before January.

"We'll see," she said.

Khalil and Richter are Times staff writers. Times staff writers Richard Boudreaux in New York and Borzou Daragahi in Beirut contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iziran2-2008nov02.0.5562691.story>

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Japan Times
November 1, 2008

MSDF to Target ICBM Warhead in Test

HONOLULU (AP)--A Maritime Self-Defense Force warship will attempt to shoot down a separating missile warhead in a ballistic missile defense test off Hawaii next month.

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency said Thursday the target will be fired from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai. The MSDF ship Chokai will then attempt to shoot it down over the Pacific Ocean.

The agency didn't say when the test would be held.

Last December, Japan became the first U.S. ally to shoot down a midrange ballistic missile from a ship when the Kongo intercepted a nonseparating target off Hawaii.

Separating targets are more difficult to shoot down because the interceptor must distinguish between the target's warhead and booster.

U.S. Navy ships have already intercepted separating ballistic missile targets.

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/rss/nn20081101b4.html>

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International Herald Tribune

Japanese Navy Ship to Intercept Missile off Hawaii

The Associated Press
Saturday, November 1, 2008

HONOLULU: A Japanese navy ship is due to intercept a separating missile target in a bilateral ballistic missile defense test off Hawaii next month.

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency said Thursday the target will be fired from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai. The Chokai will shoot it down over the Pacific Ocean.

The agency didn't say when the test would be held.

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<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/10/31/america/NA-US-Hawaii-Missile-Defense-Test.php>

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NBC San Diego

4,3,2,1 -- Direct Hit

Monday, 3 November 2008

San Diego commander oversees missile test in Pacific Ocean

KAUAI, Hawaii -- The Navy completed its first successful intercept of a ballistic missile target over the Pacific Ocean during Fleet Exercise Pacific Blitz, military officials said.

This is the first time that the Navy had command and control of the event. Prior to this, it was in the hands of the Missile Defense Agency.

Vice Adm. Samuel J. Locklear, Commander of the U.S. Third Fleet oversaw the exercise. Locklear is based out of Point Loma. The Standard Missile-3 test was launched from Barking Sands in Kauai, Hawaii.

"Pacific Blitz highlights the successful transition from developmental test flights to operational fleet execution," Locklear said.

The energy released from the impact is equivalent to the force released when a ten-ton truck traveling at 600 miles per hour hits a wall, the Navy said. Extensive analysis of the flight mission will be used to improve the deployed Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense system.

<http://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/4321 -- Direct Hit.html>

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Miami Herald

November 1, 2008

In Asia, Doubts Grow About a Nuclear-Free North Korea

Experts now speculate that the most achievable goal in talks with North Korea may be a halt in the production of nuclear fuel for weapons.

By Tim Johnson, McClatchy News Service

BEIJING -- As negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program stumble along, some scholars and policymakers around Asia now believe that the talks may never lead Pyongyang to cede all of its nuclear weapons.

Instead, they say the best that can be hoped for is to halt North Korea from producing nuclear fuel to make any more weapons.

The view is far from universal, and the governments at multilateral talks over the North Korea nuclear program publicly stick to the objective of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

Privately, however, some experts on North Korea note a changing mood, saying the talks have become unpredictable even by the usual standards applied to the reclusive nation.

"When you talk to the specialists, even government people, off the record, you hear, 'We don't have a better solution, and if we can keep this thing frozen, that's the best we'll have,'" said Ralph A. Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a Honolulu arm of the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Rarely spoken

Such views are rarely voiced in public because they threaten the six-party talks that began in 2003, held by China with the participation of Russia, Japan, the United States and the two Koreas, with the aim of rolling back North Korea's nuclear program.

"No one dares declare that we are prepared to accept a part of the nuclear program in North Korea," said Shi Yinzhong, an international relations expert at People's University of China.

Shi said, however, that the Bush administration has softened its demands on Pyongyang, and other nations have come to see partial success in the talks as better than a rupture.

He cited a long-standing stumbling block this year over North Korea's still-secret declaration of its nuclear activities, and its haggling over a plan to verify such activities.

Public posturing

"Everyone with common sense knows that this statement of denuclearization is not complete," Shi said, adding that the negotiators "will pretend that it is good and wonderful . . . and declare it in ambiguous language and say [the talks have] made progress."

The senior U.S. negotiator on North Korea, Christopher Hill, traveled to Pyongyang Oct. 1 to 3 to seek the Kim regime's assent to a verification regimen on its nuclear activities. On Oct. 11, the Bush administration removed North Korea from a list of nations considered state sponsors of terrorism, an incentive to get Pyongyang to resume disabling its nuclear plants.

But the nuclear talks have stalled amid worsening tensions between North and South Korea and rumors that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, 66, remains in critical condition after reportedly suffering a stroke in early August.

Japan's Fuji Television showed footage Monday night of a man identified as Kim's eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, entering a Paris hospital last week for meetings with a neurosurgeon. The surgeon has declined to say whether he'd treat Kim.

"We don't think that he's in a state where he's incapable of making any decisions at all," Japan Prime Minister Taro Aso was quoted as saying Tuesday.

"Our understanding is that if that were the case, we would be seeing different developments."

Mistrust between Washington and Pyongyang remains a major stumbling block to denuclearization, several scholars in Beijing and Seoul said.

"It would be extremely difficult to denuclearize North Korean weapons unless the North Korean military is sure there's no threat from the outside, particularly the United States," said Moon Chung-in, a professor at Seoul's Yonsei University and former national security advisor.

Moon said negotiators like Hill wisely focus on North Korea's future capabilities rather than its existing weapons, leaving them for a later phase.

Talks important

Even as the hopes that soared in February 2007 when North Korea signed on to a disarmament accord sink a bit, some senior scholars say the talks must be kept alive.

"The alternative would be terrible. Look at Iran," said Wu Jianmin, a career diplomat and former president of China Foreign Affairs University, referring to the threat that military sanctions could replace diplomacy against Tehran. "A diplomatic solution may not be very fast. [But] it's much better for the world."

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/world/story/745755.html>

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Wall Street Journal
NOVEMBER 1, 2008

North Korean Plane was Grounded at U.S. Request

By JAY SOLOMON, KRISHNA POKHAREL and PETER WONACOTT

India blocked a North Korean plane from delivering cargo to Iran in August, responding to a U.S. request based on fears about the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

The secret action, described by Western and Asian officials, took place nine weeks before President George W. Bush removed North Korea from Washington's list of terrorism sponsors, as part of an agreement to declaw the North's nuclear program.

U.S. diplomats say engaging North Korea is the best way to ensure its nuclear program doesn't grow more dangerous. But the August incident underscores concern about the Stalinist state's ties to America's foes across the globe. U.S. intelligence officials have said North Korea was helping Syria build a nuclear reactor until the site was bombed by Israel last year. Syria and North Korea reject the charge.

According to the Western and Asian officials, the North Korean plane, an Ilyushin-62 long-range jet owned by the North Korean state airline, made a stop in Myanmar on Aug. 7 and sought permission from Indian air-traffic controllers to fly over Indian airspace. India eventually blocked the flight at Washington's behest, the officials said.

Neither the White House nor the Indian prime minister's office would comment on the operation or describe the cargo believed to be aboard the plane. But officials familiar with the matter said the move was part of the Bush administration's Proliferation Security Initiative, which aims to block the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Any action under the initiative would be ordered only if the plane was suspected of carrying nuclear materials, long-range missile components or other potentially lethal cargo, they said.

The U.S. has long charged Pyongyang with supplying missile technologies to countries like Iran, Syria and Libya. In June 2007, the Bush administration worked with allies to block a Syrian aircraft from landing in Pyongyang on the belief it was engaged in the missile trade. A 2006 United Nations Security Council resolution bars North Korean involvement in long-range missile sales or purchases.

"We never saw nuclear cooperation" between North Korea and Iran, "but ballistic-missile cooperation is a key part of the process of delivering a nuclear payload," said John Bolton, who started the antiproliferation initiative and helped to oversee it as a State Department official during President Bush's first term.

In October, the Bush administration reached a nuclear deal with Kim Jong Il's government that focuses on verifying the dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear reactor and shutting down other parts of North Korea's nuclear program. However the agreement doesn't outline steps to end North Korea's production and sales of its medium- and long-range missiles, known as the Nodong and Taepodong.

On Oct. 23, the State Department blacklisted two North Korean companies, Korea Mining Development Corp. and Korea Taesong Trading Co., for violating U.S. bans on the sale of equipment used in building missiles or other weapons of mass destruction to Iran and Syria.

The State Department's point man on North Korea, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, has regularly argued that engaging North Korea and dispatching inspectors to the country greatly enhances Washington's ability to monitor Pyongyang's activities. U.S. officials also say North Korea's missile program can be addressed as negotiations gain momentum and Pyongyang gains confidence in diplomacy.

One uncertainty is the state of Mr. Kim's health. He hasn't been seen in public since August and is believed to have suffered a stroke.

In the August incident, the North Korean Air Koryo jet, which had stopped in Mandalay, Myanmar, was initially given permission by air-traffic control in Kolkata to fly through Indian airspace.

At 6:35 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time on Aug. 7, India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation in New Delhi sent a message to the Kolkata controllers canceling permission, according to D. Guin, a supervisor at Kolkata Air Traffic Control. Mr. Guin reviewed the flight records of Air Koryo Flight 621 at the request of The Wall Street Journal. Mr.

Guin said the denial was then passed on to air traffic control officials in Yangon, Myanmar's capital, who turned back the flight.

A Western official working on antiproliferation activities who was briefed on the Indian action said the U.S. requested the move in support of its antiproliferation program. The official didn't specify the cargo but said the Air Koryo flight was scheduled to fly to Iran.

"North Korea has been supplying missiles to Iran and Syria for some time," said the official. "North Korea has never agreed to stop selling arms to anyone," despite the nuclear accord, he said.

In the U.S. presidential race, Democrat Barack Obama has publicly supported the Bush administration's diplomatic process with North Korea, while his Republican opponent, John McCain, has voiced skepticism.

Write to Jay Solomon at jay.solomon@wsj.com, Krishna Pokharel at krishna.pokharel@wsj.com and Peter Wonacott at peter.wonacott@wsj.com

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122549443144289535.html>

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San Diego Union-Tribune
November 2, 2008

U.S. Relented Over N. Korea Document

TOKYO – In what some analysts see as major behind-the-scenes concessions in talks last month, the United States has agreed to have the issues of verifying North Korea's suspected high-enrichment uranium program and nuclear proliferation referred to in an appendix to the main document, sources said yesterday.

The appendix is less binding than the main document adopted in the Oct. 1-3 talks between the two countries, which may mean the two key points of contention might be mothballed in forthcoming six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear activities, according to sources familiar with the talks.

The Washington-Pyongyang accord requires fewer verification records over plutonium use, the sources said on condition of anonymity.

Also, North Korea's official media said this morning that its leader, Kim Jong-il, thought to have suffered a stroke in August, attended a soccer match.

--MCT News Service

http://www.signonsandiego.com/uniontrib/20081102/news_1n2world.html

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Washington Times
November 2, 2008

Pg. 6

North Korea

Kim Watches Game, Official Media Says

SEOUL--North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has watched a soccer game, official media said Sunday amid mounting speculation about the state of his health.

The Korean Central News Agency did not say when Mr. Kim watched the match between two army teams.

After watching the match, Mr. Kim congratulated the players on their success in the match, expressing "great satisfaction over a high level of the game played by them," the agency said, adding that the leader watched the game along with senior army and communist party personnel.

The report was the latest in a series apparently aimed at suggesting that the leader is well, after widespread foreign reports that Mr. Kim, 66, suffered a stroke in mid-August.

<http://washingtontimes.com/news/2008/nov/02/world-briefs-7759216/>

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The Times of India

North Korea Releases New Photos of Leader Kim Jong Il

3 Nov 2008, AP

SEOUL, South Korea: North Korea released a photograph showing leader Kim Jong Il smiling and watching a football game, the latest apparent attempt to calm intense speculation over the health of the country's absolute ruler.

Kim, 66, reportedly suffered a stroke and underwent brain surgery in August. North Korea has denied he is ill and has in recent weeks released news reports, photos and footage portraying the leader as active and able.

North Korean state television on Sunday showed an undated still photo of what it said was Kim watching a football game between two army-affiliated teams.

The photo shows Kim sitting with other people and watching something from what appears to be a special viewing stand inside a building. Kim is shown smiling, wearing his trademark sunglasses with a brown jacket and black pants.

The North's state-run TV broadcast 13 other shots showing Kim in the same clothes talking with people near a field, although no athletes are shown. The rest of photos show stand-alone scenes of a football match near a small hill with trees showing autumn foliage.

On Monday, South Korea's Dong-a Ilbo and other newspapers said the way Kim is holding his left arm appears unnatural in some of the images, suggesting that might be a sign he is suffering from paralysis as a result of his reported stroke.

Dong-a noted that Kim's left thumb is tucked into a jacket pocket in one photo, as though to support the arm.

But Dr. Kim Jong-sung, a professor of neurology at Seoul's Asan Medical Center, said such a pose does not necessarily indicate paralysis. He noted that Kim's smile looks natural, suggesting he does not have paralysis.

"Paralysis on an arm comes together with paralysis on the face and the leg" on the same side, Kim said. "His smiling face doesn't look asymmetrical and he was standing well. Therefore, it appears there is no paralysis or even if there is, it must be very light."

South Korea's Unification Ministry is analyzing the photos with the help of outside experts, spokesman Kim Honyeon said Sunday. On Monday, he said he had no update, adding that it is difficult to determine the leader's health through still photos. He noted that there are no unusual signs in North Korean state affairs.

Speculation about Kim's health spiked after he missed a key celebration marking the country's 60th birthday on Sept. 9. He has not been seen in public since mid-August.

Last week, South Korea's spy chief, Kim Sung-ho, said that the North Korean leader appeared to have recovered enough to carry out his official duties, although he was "not physically perfect."

The North released the photos and footage to show the outside world that Kim Jong Il has no health problems and is in command of the country because "speculation on his health has been raised endlessly," said Kim Keun-sik, a North Korea expert at South Korea's Kyungnam University.

The reports, photos and video of Kim attending football games and inspecting military units are all undated. Photos released last month showing a healthy-looking Kim inspecting a military unit appeared outdated, with lush greenery in the background at a time when the entire Korean peninsula is awash in autumnal foliage.

Kim's health is of keen interest because he rules the isolate, nuclear-armed nation with absolute authority and has not publicly named any successors.

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/World/NKorea_releases_photos_of_Kim_Jong_II/articleshow/3667191.cms

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International Herald Tribune

More Kim Jong II Photos are Released

By Choe Sang-Hun

Sunday, November 2, 2008

SEOUL: The North Korean state-run news media on Sunday released photos showing its leader, Kim Jong-il, smiling and looking vivacious, some two months after he was believed to have suffered a stroke.

North Korea has in recent weeks struggled to counter intense speculation from abroad about the state of its leader's health, with methods that have tended to raise more questions about Kim's medical condition.

The state-run media reported that the latest photos were taken when Kim, 66, watched a match between two military-affiliated soccer teams but did not reveal when or where the game took place. But the trees in the background were yellow or brown, indicating that they were taken during autumn.

Since Kim missed a parade on Sept. 9 marking the 60th anniversary of the North Korean government, officials in Pyongyang have done little to dispel speculation that he may have been at least partially paralyzed.

The United States and South Korean officials believe that Kim may have suffered a stroke, probably around August. North Korea has disparaged such reports as a Western-backed conspiracy to sabotage its government and has insisted that Kim has no health problems.

In two pictures released Sunday, Kim was smiling brightly. In one, he was talking to several officials, gesticulating with his right hand. In another, he was sitting in a chair in what appeared to be a special viewing box.

In both pictures, he did not use his left hand. In one, it rested on his lap and in the other, his thumb was hooked into his coat pocket. Kim wore his trademark sunglasses and his usual full head of wavy hair, although South Korean officials said Kim has probably had brain surgery at least once.

Since he failed to attend the Sept. 9 parade, speculation has persisted over what might happen to Asia's only Communist dynasty and to the country's nuclear arsenal if Kim were incapacitated. South Korean officials have said that he has recovered enough to maintain his grip on key state affairs.

Last month, the North's official news media made its first mention of Kim appearing in public since mid-August. But photos of him released at the time showed a verdant green background, prompting some experts to suspect that they may have been taken months before his reported illness.

Speculation continued last week when Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan said that intelligence indicated that Kim was probably in the hospital, though still in control. Last week, Kim also missed the funeral of one of the most senior members of the ruling Workers' Party.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/02/asia/03korea.php>

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International Herald Tribune/The Associated Press

November 3, 2008

Bin Laden Aide Convicted of Terrorism-Related Charges

GUANTÁNAMO BAY NAVAL BASE, Cuba: An aide to Osama bin Laden who refused to defend himself at his Guantánamo war crimes trial was convicted of three terrorism-related charges Monday that could bring life in prison.

The jury of military officers at the second Guantánamo war crimes trial voted to convict the aide, Ali Hamza Ahmed Sulayman al-Bahlul, of 35 counts of conspiracy, solicitation to commit murder and providing material support to terrorism.

Bahlul, 39, a citizen of Yemen, showed no emotion, sitting calmly at the defense table as the verdict was read after a weeklong trial in which he did not mount a defense. He was convicted of 17 counts of conspiracy, 8 counts of solicitation to commit murder and 10 counts of providing material support for terrorism.

The jury dismissed one count of conspiracy and one count of providing material support for terrorism.

A post-trial hearing was required before the sentencing. The hearing included testimony from the father of a sailor killed in the 2000 attack on the U.S. Navy destroyer Cole, which was featured in a video that the military says Bahlul produced to train and inspire terrorists from Al Qaeda.

Bahlul, who was brought to Guantánamo in 2002, is the second prisoner to go through a trial under the special military commissions system. The first, a former bin Laden driver, Salim Hamdan, was convicted of lesser charges in August and sentenced to five and a half years in prison.

In a pretrial hearing, Bahlul called the military tribunal a "legal farce" and refused to mount a defense. His appointed lawyer stayed silent at the trial, refusing even to answer questions from the judge.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/11/03/america/terror.php>

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Los Angeles Times

October 31, 2008

U.S. Airstrike Killed Key Al Qaeda Figure in Pakistan, Officials Say

U.S. anti-terrorism forces appear to be targeting second-tier leaders who run the network's day-to-day operations.

By Sebastian Rotella and Laura King

Reporting from Kabul, Afghanistan, and Madrid — A U.S. airstrike in northwestern Pakistan is believed to have killed a front-line leader of Al Qaeda, anti-terrorism officials said this week, continuing an aerial barrage that has angered a key American ally but is thought to have hurt the network's operations.

Intelligence indicates that a missile apparently fired from a U.S. Predator drone killed Khalid Habib, a veteran Egyptian militant who became a leader this year of the "external operations" core based in South Asia but targeting the West, a senior European anti-terrorism official said Thursday.

Habib apparently died in a vehicle that was blown up in the attack Oct. 16 in the village of Saam, a hub of foreign militants protected by tribesmen loyal to a Taliban chief in the South Waziristan region, said the official, who asked to remain anonymous because of the sensitivity of the issue.

As with other Al Qaeda bosses thought to have been slain by U.S. airstrikes in Pakistan this year, confirmation of Habib's demise remains difficult, and there was conflicting information about the number of casualties in the attack, the official said. But the intelligence seems solid, he said.

"Our working assumption is that he is dead," the official said.

The slaying of Habib, if confirmed, continues a pattern in which U.S. anti-terrorism forces have set their sights on key second-tier leaders who run day-to-day operations for Osama bin Laden and his top deputy, Ayman Zawahiri,

both fugitives. The priority has been to disrupt plotting and training for potential attacks on Western targets, anti-terrorism officials say.

Abu Laith al Libi, a Libyan, is among operational chiefs slain this year. Anti-terrorism officials also believe that a strike in July killed Abu Khabab Masri, an Egyptian explosives expert whose real name was Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar and who led Al Qaeda's efforts to develop chemical weapons. At least 15 suspected Predator strikes have taken place since early August, more than three times the year's total up until then.

As the pace of the raids has accelerated, the subject has become very delicate for Pakistan's 7-month-old civilian government. On Wednesday, Pakistani leaders summoned U.S. Ambassador Anne W. Patterson to demand a halt to airstrikes, saying they violated Pakistan's sovereignty.

Nonetheless, the aerial onslaught appears to have kept the predominantly Arab Al Qaeda core on the run. Residents in North and South Waziristan say militants in recent weeks have avoided mosques and religious schools, which have been prime targets.

Habib's rise reflected disarray in a depleted leadership, the European official said. Intelligence officials believe the Egyptian shared operational control with bosses identified as Abdullah Said al Libi and Osama al Timi, the official said.

"There were suggestions that Habib had taken over as the head of Al Qaeda military operations," he said. "But we believe there was a more complicated setup in which he was part of a leadership team. . . . They are having genuine problems replacing some of these top individuals. They are trying out different formulas."

In 2005, Bin Laden appointed Habib commander of military operations in Afghanistan, said the official and Rohan Gunaratna, a Singapore-based terrorism expert. A close friend of Zawahiri, Habib was considered an "able commander," but "much less inspiring" than more powerful chiefs who have since been killed or captured, said Gunaratna, who has had access to intelligence and captured militants.

In 2006, Habib played a role in talks with tribesmen in the region to ensure a refuge for Al Qaeda, Gunaratna said. The network operates in the part of South Waziristan where he died, under the protection of Baitullah Mahsud, a prominent Taliban chief, officials say.

In addition to inflicting the high-ranking casualties, U.S. and Pakistani military pressure appears to have slowed Al Qaeda's propaganda and communications activities on the Internet, the European official said. Anti-terrorism experts are waiting to see whether Bin Laden issues a video before Tuesday's U.S. presidential election, as he did in 2004.

Rotella and King are Times staff writers. Special correspondent Zulfiqar Ali in Peshawar, Pakistan, contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-habib31-2008oct31.0,1943174.story>

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Washington Post
November 2, 2008
Pg. 16
Yemen

U.S. Embassy Attackers Said Linked to Al-Qaeda

The six-man suicide squad that assaulted the U.S. Embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, on Sept. 17 had trained at al-Qaeda camps in the southern Yemeni provinces of Hadramut and Marib, and three of them had recently returned from Iraq, a Yemeni security official said Saturday. Armed with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles, the attackers drove two cars packed with explosives into the embassy gate and sprayed it with bullets before being killed. Besides the attackers, 13 others died in the incident, including an 18-year-old American woman of Yemeni origin. It was the deadliest direct assault on a U.S. embassy in a decade.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/01/AR2008110102067.html>

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Washington Post
November 2, 2008

Pg. 1

Terrorism Financing Blacklists at Risk

Global System Faces Multiple Challenges

By Craig Whitlock, Washington Post Foreign Service

BRUSSELS -- The global blacklisting system for financiers of al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups is at risk of collapse, undermined by legal challenges and waning political support in many countries, according to counterterrorism officials in Europe and the United States. In September, the European Court of Justice threw the future of the United Nations' sanctions program against al-Qaeda and the Taliban into doubt when it declared the blacklist violated the "fundamental rights" of those targeted. The Luxembourg-based court said the list lacked accountability and made it almost impossible for people to challenge their inclusion.

Courts in Britain and France have also questioned whether European countries can enforce the U.N. sanctions and other blacklists without violating local laws, including a defendant's right to see evidence. The United Nations keeps such evidence secret. The U.N. blacklist is the backbone of an international effort to prevent al-Qaeda supporters from raising or transferring money. All U.N. members are required to impose a travel ban and asset freeze against the 503 individuals, businesses and groups on the list. About \$85 million in al-Qaeda and Taliban assets is frozen worldwide. Enforcement, however, is inconsistent; some countries have quietly permitted alleged supporters of al-Qaeda to travel and to access their bank accounts.

Moreover, the U.N. program is just one of several terrorism-financing blacklists sponsored by the United States, the European Union and Britain. Although each is intended to prevent terrorism, they overlap and sometimes clash with one another, leading to confusion over whose assets, besides al-Qaeda's, should be frozen, and under whose authority. Hezbollah, for instance, is included on the U.S. and British blacklists. But it is not considered a terrorist group by the European Union.

Some counterterrorism officials say the blacklists are a vital, if imperfect, tool in fighting al-Qaeda and other groups -- particularly the U.N. sanctions program, which is the only one that governments and banks are compelled to enforce worldwide.

But other officials say the sanctions have outlived their usefulness. They note that al-Qaeda largely avoids the international banking system and needs only small sums of money to finance terrorist plots. The number of assets frozen in recent years by the United Nations, for instance, has remained static.

Worries About Procedures

In Europe, opposition to the blacklists has centered on what critics claim is a lack of due process and the potential for political abuse. People named to the U.N. blacklist cannot examine the evidence against them, cannot remain on the list indefinitely and are not granted an automatic right of appeal. In January, the 47-nation Council of Europe, the continent's leading human rights watchdog, concluded that the U.N. and E.U. blacklists were "totally arbitrary and have no credibility whatsoever."

European prosecutors have dropped criminal investigations of several accused al-Qaeda financiers targeted by the U.N. sanctions after failing to find evidence that would stand up in court. But the United Nations has refused to remove all but one of those individuals from its blacklist, saying that it still thinks they are supporters of terrorism.

"You can be added to the list for political reasons, without any serious evidence of wrongdoing," said Armando Spataro, the deputy chief prosecutor in Milan, whose office investigated three people on the U.N. blacklist but found no grounds to press criminal charges. "There is a risk of making many, many mistakes."

The United Nations has made several modifications in response to the criticism. But Richard Barrett, a British diplomat and coordinator of the U.N. team monitoring the Taliban and al-Qaeda, which maintains the blacklist, said the world body would probably not go as far as some European courts and governments would like.

For example, he said, it was highly unlikely that the United Nations would ever agree to allow a court or independent panel to review its decisions. Such a move could infringe on powers granted under the U.N. charter, he said. Barrett warned that a solution was elusive. If European governments stop enforcing the blacklist because of local court decisions, he said, other countries might also effectively abandon the program. "It can clearly lead to collapse," Barrett said in an interview in New York. "People are worried about the whole procedure, about the difficulty in getting people off the list and the possibility of legal challenge. . . . We have to address these problems."

A Dwindling of Support

The U.N. blacklist was created in 1999 by the Security Council to pressure Afghanistan -- then ruled by the Taliban -- to expel al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden and his followers. Previously, the United Nations used sanctions only against countries, such as Iraq. The Security Council, however, wanted to avoid punishing the general population of Afghanistan and decided instead to target individuals, businesses and groups that supported al-Qaeda. The U.N. sanctions program is controlled by the council, which has the power to add and delete names based on intelligence reports and other evidence, which are kept secret.

Most of the names were added at the urging of the United States, according to U.S. and U.N. officials. As long as no one on the Security Council objects, nominations are automatically approved. Getting off the list is more difficult. Until two years ago, targets could not even approach the United Nations to ask for a review; they had to ask their country of nationality to take up their cause, something many are reluctant to do. Today, targets can write directly to the Security Council to plead their case. But the council is under no obligation to respond.

In July, the council agreed to make public the reasons why specific individuals and groups had been added to the blacklist. U.N. officials said the disclosures will be published on the Internet soon, although only a few paragraphs will be released on each case. Diplomats said there had been widespread backing for the al-Qaeda sanctions at first, especially after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But enthusiasm later waned in some countries, in part because of opposition to the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

"Once we got into the middle of 2003, we found that people were not so supportive anymore," said Michael Chandler, a former British Army officer who headed the U.N. Taliban and al-Qaeda monitoring group from 2001 to 2004. "Too many countries, for a variety of reasons, really didn't implement the sanctions properly." Victor D. Comras, a former State Department official who served on the U.N. monitoring group until 2004, acknowledged that many countries had lost faith in the blacklist and that as a result, the number of new names had dwindled in recent years.

But he said the blacklist ought to be expanded rather than curtailed, arguing that it does not reflect al-Qaeda's evolution into a decentralized movement and that it needs to include financiers of affiliated terrorist groups. "The list is much too short. It is significantly out-of-date," he said. "It's not used as effectively or efficiently as it could be."

A Legal Challenge

The most serious challenge to the U.N. sanctions has been posed by Yassin Abdullah Kadi, a Saudi businessman who had millions of dollars in assets frozen by several countries after he was named to the blacklist in October 2001. Kadi is a co-plaintiff in the lawsuit before the European Court of Justice, which ruled that his right to a fair hearing was violated by E.U. countries enforcing the U.N. list.

Kadi, 53, resides in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia, but has business holdings in Switzerland, Malaysia, Albania, Turkey and other countries. He has denied ever supporting al-Qaeda, financially or otherwise. In December, the Swiss attorney general dropped an inquiry into Kadi's finances after finding no evidence of criminal acts. About \$9 million of his assets remain frozen in Switzerland, however, because the United Nations has not removed him from its blacklist, Swiss officials said.

"He's never been given a fair opportunity to challenge this," said Guy Martin, Kadi's London-based attorney. "This is what is so iniquitous: He'd be better off if he was a criminal defendant and subject to the rule of law." Martin declined to say how many of Kadi's assets remain frozen worldwide. He also declined to speculate why Kadi was named to the blacklist. "We can only assume it was a knee-jerk reaction to the events of 9/11," he said.

The European Court of Justice has given the European Union until December to provide Kadi with an explanation for why he was blacklisted, as well as a mechanism to appeal. Officials at the European Union's headquarters in

Brussels said they were preparing a response but were in an awkward position. "It would have been better to have this system at the U.N. level, for them to decide," said Gilles de Kerchove, the E.U. counterterrorism coordinator.

Lobbying for a Change

Meanwhile, Switzerland is being sued by Youssef Nada, a 77-year-old Egyptian citizen and Muslim Brotherhood supporter who has been on the U.N. blacklist since 2001. Nada has taken his case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. He has accused Switzerland of violating his rights by blocking his assets even though the Swiss federal prosecutor, after a long investigation, found no evidence that he had broken any laws.

As in the Kadi case, Switzerland has said it is compelled to keep Nada's assets frozen because of its legal obligation to the U.N. blacklist, a stance upheld by the Swiss Supreme Court. But Swiss officials said they are worried they could still be held liable by the European Court of Human Rights. "We have an obligation to follow U.N. sanctions but also to follow human rights laws," said Christine Schraner, the Swiss Foreign Ministry's coordinator for counterterrorism. "We feel it's very important not to have a conflict."

Switzerland is one of a group of European countries -- others include Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Liechtenstein -- that have been lobbying the United Nations to change its policy. Among other recommendations, they have asked the Security Council to form an advisory panel of terrorism-financing experts that could review requests by individuals to have their names removed from the list.

"Our intention is not to weaken the system. To the contrary, we want to strengthen the sanctions system," Schraner said in an interview in Bern, the Swiss capital. "But if there's no fair and clear delisting process, then countries will be reluctant to put names on the list to begin with." "We've been warning for the past two to three years about these court decisions, but we just were not taken seriously," she added.

U.S. officials said they were not persuaded. Adam J. Szubin, director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, the U.S. Treasury agency that oversees blacklisting procedures, said permitting a court or outsiders to hear appeals would be "troubling," as well "antithetical" to the U.N. charter. He also said it would discourage countries from sharing sensitive intelligence about people on the list. "The procedure is confidential, and confidential for a reason," he said.

'The Bush List'

The U.S. Treasury maintains its own blacklist of suspected terrorism financiers. Established shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks under an executive order signed by President Bush, the list of "specially designated global terrorists" originally focused on al-Qaeda but grew to include other groups. The Treasury circulates its blacklist around the world; foreign officials commonly refer to it as "the Bush list." Although it overlaps with the U.N. blacklist, the Treasury cannot compel other countries to enforce it.

Differences between the lists can lead to confusion. Unlike the United Nations, the Treasury provides brief, public explanations of why individuals and groups are added to its blacklist. The U.S. government also allows for appeals, either administratively or in the courts. Under the terms of the executive order authorizing the blacklist, the Treasury needs to show that it acted with "reasonable cause" in adding a name; it does not need to prove guilt.

In some cases, the Treasury has blacklisted alleged al-Qaeda supporters only after failing to persuade the U.N. Security Council to do so. In January 2007, the U.S. government asked the Security Council to enforce sanctions against two South African citizens: Junaid Ismail Dockrat, a Johannesburg dentist, and his cousin, Farhad Ahmed Dockrat, a Muslim cleric. U.S. officials said there was evidence Farhad Dockrat had donated money to a charity that supported the Taliban and al-Qaeda. They said Junaid Dockrat paid travel costs for South Africans to train at al-Qaeda camps in Pakistan.

South Africa, a rotating member of the Security Council, placed an indefinite hold on the U.S. request, however, arguing that the evidence was insufficient. On Jan. 26, 2007, the Treasury added the men to the U.S. blacklist anyway, irritating South African officials. In another case, the government of Saudi Arabia has pressured Britain to take action against Saad al-Fagih, a Saudi physician living in exile in London.

Officials in Riyadh accuse Fagih, who has called for the overthrow of the Saudi government, of supporting al-Qaeda. After Britain refused to take action against Fagih, Saudi Arabia persuaded the U.N. Security Council and the

U.S. Treasury to add him to their lists in 2004. As a result, Britain was required to freeze his assets under the U.N. sanctions program.

Alexander Alvaro, a German member of the European Parliament who has criticized the selection process for the various blacklists, said it was clear in several cases that politics had overshadowed legitimate security concerns. "Is the purpose to actually prevent terrorist attacks and cut off funding for terrorist organizations, or is it to please who it might serve to put them on the list?" he said.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/01/AR2008110102214.html>

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Boston Globe/The Associated Press
November 3, 2008

2003 Attack on US Foiled, Saudi Says

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia - Saudi Arabia foiled a 2003 terror plot by militants who planned to hijack a plane and blow it up over a densely populated US city, a Saudi official said yesterday. The official said the plan, first reported yesterday in government-guided Al-Watan newspaper, was for the attackers to transit through the United States to another destination so they could avoid applying for hard-to-get American visas required for Saudis. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the militants were preparing to execute the alleged plot when it was halted.

Fifteen of the 19 hijackers who attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, were Saudis. The Saudi official said the alleged hijacking plan was one of 160 terror plots the kingdom announced last month it had foiled. At the time, authorities provided no details about any of the plots and it was unclear why Saudi authorities had not publicly revealed the 2003 plan previously. The official did not say which city was targeted or whether arrests were made.

Last month, Prince Nayef, the interior minister, announced that authorities had indicted 991 suspected militants on charges that they participated in terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia over the last five years. Another 160 attacks were foiled, the ministry said at the time. The official said the countries that would have been targeted in any of the 160 attacks were notified at the time the plots were uncovered.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2008/11/03/2003_attack_on_us_foiled_saudi_says/

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