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The Report of the Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism
December 2, 2008

WMD Panel Releases Report to Congress: World at Risk

Nuclear and Biological Weapons Pose Greatest Peril

WASHINGTON, – A congressionally appointed commission is calling on the President-elect and the next Congress to immediately initiate several concrete actions, unilaterally and with the international community, to address the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that pose the greatest peril: nuclear and biological weapons. The Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism released its report, “World at Risk” today, and is briefing Vice President-elect Biden, President Bush and congressional leaders.

“Ours remains a world at risk and our margin of safety is shrinking, not growing. The Commission believes that unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is likely that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013,” said former Sen. Bob Graham, the Commission chairman. Graham said the Commission reached this sobering conclusion following six months of deliberations, site visits and interviews with more than 250 government officials and nongovernmental experts in the United States and abroad.

“The report covers a lot of important ground but probably the most important is its assessment: the risk is growing, not because we're making no progress but because the enemy is adapting and we must constantly anticipate and adapt as well across a broad front,” former U.S. Sen. Jim Talent, the Commission’s vice chairman said.

The Commission centered its findings on several areas where it determined the risks to the United States are increasing: the crossroads of terrorism and proliferation in the poorly governed parts of Pakistan, the prevention of biological and nuclear terrorism, and the potential erosion of international nuclear security, treaties and norms as we enter a nuclear energy renaissance.

The WMD report also details concrete recommendations to ensure a more efficient and effective domestic policy coordination structure, oversight reform and enhanced cooperation among appropriate law-enforcement and counterterrorism communities. Recommendations for the principal concerns include:

- 1. Radically revamp our strategic policy on Pakistan. Conditions in that country pose a serious challenge to America’s short-term and medium-term national security interests.**

Our recommendation is clear: we must work with Pakistan and other countries in the region to eliminate terrorist safe havens through military, economic and diplomatic means; secure nuclear and biological materials in Pakistan, counter and defeat extremist ideology; and constrain a nascent nuclear arms race in Asia.

- 2. Develop a new blueprint to prevent biological weapons proliferation and bioterrorism.**

Terrorists are more likely to unleash an aerosol can filled with pathogens than to strike with a nuclear weapon. We must assess our domestic program to secure and identify the origins of dangerous pathogens; tighten oversight of our high-containment laboratories; and improve our rapid response to prevent biological attacks from inflicting mass casualties. On the global stage, we can take the lead in cultivating global measures to develop an action plan for universal adherence to and compliance with the anemic 36-year-old Biological Weapons Convention.

- 3. Reinvigorate the nuclear non-proliferation agenda. Nuclear terrorism is still a preventable catastrophe and it is our duty to stop nuclear trafficking and reaffirm the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.**

We must set strong penalties for violators who withdraw from the protective constraints of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and strengthen the International Atomic Energy Agency with more authority and resources. We must develop and employ further counter-proliferation efforts, and work with Russia to secure its nuclear materials and forge a global consensus for a nuclear fuel bank.

“Our near miss during the course of our fieldwork for this report served as a reminder of the urgency of our mission and message. Members of our Commission were en route to Islamabad when a horrific bomb blast destroyed the Islamabad Marriott Hotel, where we were to stay just hours later . More than fifty people died in that terrorist

attack,” Graham said. “Ours remains a world at risk, but we are convinced that adopting our recommendations will enhance our safety and that of the world.”

The report called for a new emphasis on open and honest engagement between government and citizens in safeguarding the United States, with better methods of distributing knowledge about potential terrorist attacks, coordinated public response mechanisms and improved networks of communications.

Established by House Resolution 1 to implement a key recommendation of the 9/11 Commission, the WMD Commission was charged with assessing current activities, initiatives, and programs of the United States to prevent weapons of mass destruction proliferation and terrorism. The full Commission report and additional views are available at <http://www.preventwmd.gov>.

For the full report see: <http://www.preventwmd.gov/report/>

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New York Times
December 1, 2008
Pg. 11

Panel Fears Use of Unconventional Weapon

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON — An independent commission has concluded that terrorists will most likely carry out an attack with biological, nuclear or other unconventional weapons somewhere in the world in the next five years unless the United States and its allies act urgently to prevent that.

In a report to be released this week, the Congressionally mandated panel found that with countries like Iran and North Korea pursuing nuclear weapons programs, and with the risk of poorly secured biological pathogens growing, unconventional threats are fast outpacing the defenses arrayed to confront them.

“America’s margin of safety is shrinking, not growing,” the bipartisan panel concluded.

Prepared before last week’s deadly terrorist attacks in Mumbai — which American officials say were most likely carried out by Pakistani militant groups based in Kashmir — the report also singled out Pakistan as a top security priority for the coming Obama administration.

“Were one to map terrorism and weapons of mass destruction today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan,” the report states, citing the country’s terrorist haven along the border with Afghanistan and its tense relations with nuclear rival India.

“Pakistan is an ally, but there is a grave danger it could also be an unwitting source of a terrorist attack on the United States — possibly with weapons of mass destruction,” the report said.

The report is the result of a six-month study by the Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction Proliferation and Terrorism, which Congress created last spring in keeping with one of the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

The nine-member panel received classified briefings, conducted several site visits, including meetings in Russia, and interviewed more than 250 government and independent experts in several countries.

The New York Times obtained a copy of the report’s 18-page executive summary. Details from draft chapters of the report on the threat of bioterrorism were published Sunday by The Washington Post.

The panel’s 13 recommendations focus on fighting the threat of bioterrorism, including improved bioforensic capabilities, and strengthening international organizations, like the International Atomic Energy Agency, to address the nuclear threat. It also calls for a comprehensive approach for dealing with Pakistan.

Over all, the findings and recommendations seek to serve as a road map for the Obama administration.

“Unless the world community acts decisively and with great urgency, it is more likely than not that a weapon of mass destruction will be used in a terrorist attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013,” the report states in the opening sentence of the executive summary.

Commission officials said that date is a judgment based on scores of interviews and classified briefings conducted by members of the panel — led by former Senators Bob Graham, Democrat of Florida, and Jim Talent, Republican of Missouri — but does not represent a new formal assessment by the United States intelligence agencies.

Several of the recommendations are not new and have been pursued with varying degrees of success by the Bush administration. On Pakistan, for example, the panel urges the Obama administration to work with Pakistan to eliminate that country’s terrorist havens, secure its nuclear and biological materials, counter extremist ideologies and constrain a “nascent nuclear arms race in Asia.”

But the panel is banking on the fact that some of its Democratic members — including Wendy Sherman, Graham Allison and Tim Roemer— have advised President-elect Barack Obama on national security issues, and could serve in senior positions in his administration.

Ms. Sherman, for instance, is one of two former Clinton administration officials leading the transition team at the State Department for Mr. Obama.

In its wide-ranging findings, the panel faulted the Bush administration for failing to devote the same degree of high-level attention and resources to the threat of a bioterrorist attack as it has to prevent nuclear proliferation and a nuclear attack.

The report calls for conducting a major review of the program to secure dangerous pathogens and tighten oversight of high-containment laboratories.

The commission urges the Obama administration to work to halt the Iranian and North Korean nuclear weapons programs, backing up any diplomatic initiatives with “the credible threat of direct action” — code for military action, a commission official said.

Two weeks ago, the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that Iran had produced roughly enough nuclear material to make, with added purification, a single atom bomb.

The commission also criticized the administration and Congress for not organizing themselves more effectively to combat the threat of unconventional weapons. The report recommended a single White House-level office or individual responsible for directing the nation’s policy to prevent the spread of unconventional weapons and their possible use by terrorists.

Like the 9/11 Commission, this panel called for overhauling the jurisdiction of the Congressional committee that reviews the proliferation of unconventional weapons. “Congressional oversight is dysfunctional,” the report concluded.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/01/washington/01bioterror.html?partner=rss&emc=rss>

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International Herald Tribune

Defense Secretary says Nuclear Gaffes Unacceptable

The Associated Press

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

MINOT, N.D.: Hours after being named President-elect Barack Obama's choice to remain as defense secretary, Robert Gates visited Minot Air Force Base and said lapses in nuclear weapons procedures last year were unacceptable.

Gates on Monday became the first defense secretary to visit the Minot base. He stopped first in Chicago, where Obama announced he had asked the 65-year-old Pentagon chief to remain at his post.

Gates said it was not his "expectation or desire" to stay on the job, but he was persuaded to "serve a little while longer." He said he feels honored to work under Obama, who will be the eighth president he has served.

The Minot base drew attention last year when nuclear cruise missiles were mistakenly loaded onto a B-52 bomber and flown to Louisiana. The incident was cited by Gates as one factor leading to the ouster of the Air Force's chief of staff and its secretary. About 65 airmen at the Minot base were sanctioned.

Gates, speaking to the airmen in a B-52 hangar, said the missteps stemmed from a "long-standing slide of nuclear stewardship" that did not get the attention, personnel or funding it deserved.

Now, he said, more emphasis on the nuclear program is moving it in the right direction. "You must never take your duties lightly," he told the airmen. "There is simply no room for error."

The Minot bomb wing commander, Col. Joel Westa, called the Minot base a strategic prairie outpost. He told Gates, "I'm convinced when you leave here, you'll be able to rest comfortably."

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/12/02/america/Gates-Minot.php>

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World Politics Review
November 30, 2008

Mumbai Attacks Complicate U.S. Regional Policy

M.K. Bhadrakumar

The terrorist carnage in Mumbai resulting in more than 170 deaths draws attention to the role of Pakistan, which India instinctively accuses of responsibility.

The fedayeen-type attack singled out Americans and Jews as targets, which smacks of an al-Qaida game plan. Delhi initially distinguished between terrorist groups in Pakistan and the Pakistani authorities as such, but that distinction is getting blurred. Islamabad stubbornly rejects imputations of involvement. Reflexes are hardening on both sides.

In the competitive environment of domestic politics as India heads for general elections in the next six months, it will be suicidal for the ruling party to be seen as compromising on terrorism. The Indian interior minister has been forced to quit, accepting political responsibility for security failings. India is now contemplating measures aimed at freezing its "composite dialogue" with Pakistan.

Delhi feels exasperated that it has friendly relations with the Pakistani civilian leadership but lacks any communication with the army top brass, which ultimately calls the shots in Islamabad. A potential crisis in India-Pakistan relations is brewing.

The United States has said it is "duty-bound" to offer assistance to India in the investigative process, but New Delhi also expects Washington to pressure Pakistan. It will be the last major foreign policy act for the departing Bush administration and a curious dress rehearsal for the incoming Barack Obama presidency.

The prime task will be to cool tempers and avoid an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation between the two South Asian nuclear adversaries. But the ramifications are much wider for the U.S. than in any previous India-Pakistan confrontations it mediated. For the first time, U.S. interests are directly on the firing line. The repercussions for the "war on terror" in Afghanistan are at once obvious.

If India-Pakistani tensions escalate in the coming days, the U.S. will be hard-pressed to stop any Pakistani decision to divert its crack divisions from the Afghan border regions to its western border with India. Almost immediately, the impact will be felt on the war in Afghanistan.

It was only a fortnight ago that Gen. David McKiernan, supreme commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, said in a speech in Washington that Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Pervez Kiyani is expected in Kabul. "We've

started from talking to each other to today we coordinate tactical level cooperation along the border," McKiernan said.

Expressing cautious optimism, McKiernan added that he saw a "shift in thinking at the senior levels in Pakistan that this insurgency is a problem that threatens the very existence of Pakistan, and that they have to deal with it perhaps in ways that they didn't contemplate a few years ago on their side of the border. So I see a willingness and a capacity, although they have a long way to go to conduct counterinsurgency operations on the Pak side of the border."

McKiernan's worst fear would be for the Pakistani army leadership to plead it has the will to fight al-Qaida but lacks the capacity -- unless, of course, Washington can do something quickly to restore calm and tranquility on the border with India. The Pakistani interest lies in forcing a mediation role on the U.S. in the hopes of "restraining" India. Pakistan feels nervous about the rapidly expanding U.S.-India strategic partnership, and would like Washington to be even-handed in its South Asia policies.

Curiously, the attack on Mumbai underscores Pakistan's claim that Washington cannot compartmentalize the Afghan war without addressing the core issues of India-Pakistan tension. But that is easier said than done. If Washington proceeds to wade into the "core issue" of Kashmir, that may satisfy the Pakistani military, but it will surely annoy India and may even rock the foundations of the U.S.-India strategic understanding.

All indications are that in the coming weeks, President-elect Obama will be on a sharp learning curve. Of course, he has the choice of altogether skirting India-Pakistan relations, focusing instead on the Afghan war. But then the Pakistani military's commitment to the war may fall short of McKiernan's expectations. That may, in turn, entail U.S. special operations forces having to get directly involved in operations in Pakistani territory, which would have frightening consequences for Pakistan's political stability.

A political minefield awaits Obama as he sets about addressing the number one foreign policy issue of his presidency, which is to bring the Afghan war to a successful conclusion or at the very least stave off a humiliating defeat. Europe will shudder at the thought of increasing its role in such a quagmire.

M.K. Bhadrakumar was a career diplomat in the Indian Foreign Service. His assignments included the Soviet Union, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Germany, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kuwait and Turkey.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=2981>

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World Press Review
November 30, 2008

Mumbai Attacks Put Scrutiny on Pakistan's ISI

Jayshree Bajoria

The latest assault in Mumbai has brought fresh tensions to fragile India-Pakistan relations at a time when the Pakistani government had made unprecedented friendly overtures toward its traditional rival. The attacks -- which at latest count claimed more than 170 lives, while injuring over three hundred -- took place just three days after Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari proposed a "no first nuclear strike" policy with India.

According to early news reports, one of the captured attackers revealed under questioning that he was from Pakistan's Punjab province, belonged to the banned extremist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and had been trained in militant camps inside Pakistan. LeT, which has denied any responsibility, is one of the Islamist extremist groups that experts say in the past received backing from Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), to fight in Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan's government, among the first to condemn the attacks, denied accusations of responsibility and extended its cooperation, even agreeing initially to send the head of the ISI to India to assist the investigations. Pakistan has since reversed this decision, agreeing to send a senior ISI official on the trip instead.

A formerly unknown group, calling itself the Deccan Mujahideen, claimed responsibility for the latest attacks in emails sent to Indian media outlets. However, because of the time, resources, skill, training, and coordination required to carry out such an attack, most analysts believe that the Deccan Mujahideen is a front for one of the bigger, better-known militant groups, even if none of the latter have so far claimed responsibility.

Some analysts say the recent spike in terrorist attacks in India points toward a home-grown Islamic extremism that feeds on disaffected Muslims from among India's minority population of 150 million. Others point out that, even if that's the case, they are almost certainly being recruited by terror networks abroad such as the al-Qaida or those fighting in Kashmir.

If reports of the Mumbai attackers' Pakistani origins and training are confirmed, it would not only threaten the significant steps that India and Pakistan have taken toward peace. It would also diminish international confidence in the ability of Pakistan's eight-month-old democratically elected government to confront terrorism more effectively. That at a time when Pakistan is desperate for international support, with its economy in ruins and its internal security situation fragile. If the world suspects Pakistan's authorities are unable to deliver in the battle against terrorism, international assistance may be hard to come.

Already, patience with Islamabad has been running out for some time now in Washington. American troop casualties in Afghanistan continue to rise, leading the U.S. to complain that a recently launched Pakistani offensive in some of the semi-autonomous tribal areas along the Afghan border is not enough. Reports that the Mumbai assailants specifically asked for British and American passports, and targeted Jewish families, is another reason, analysts say, to believe this was not just an attack on India.

Ahmed Rashid, author of the book, "Descent into Chaos," told CNN the Mumbai attack was most probably the work of al-Qaida or the Pakistani Taliban, meant to ease the increasing pressure they feel on Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan by shifting the Pakistani military's attention to its eastern border with India, where tensions are sure to rise in the attacks' aftermath.

While the Mumbai attackers may have links to militant groups in Pakistan, most experts say it is unlikely the attack had any support from the Pakistani establishment -- whether the government, the military, or the intelligence services. Some say the relationship between the Pakistani military and some Kashmiri militant groups has greatly changed since Pakistan itself has increasingly become the target of extremist violence. Shuja Nawaz, author of the book "Crossed Swords: Pakistan, its Army, and the Wars Within," says the ISI has "lost control" of Kashmiri militant groups. According to Nawaz, some of the groups trained by the ISI to fuel insurgency in Kashmir have been implicated in bombings and attacks within Pakistan, making them army targets.

But others say Pakistani authorities continue to turn a blind eye to the Kashmiri militant groups still operating on their soil, reluctant to give up what they see as a strategic asset in their longstanding dispute with India. Lashkar-e-Taiba, for instance, after being banned by Pakistan following Islamabad's alliance with the United States in the global "War on Terror," cleverly morphed into Jammāt ud Dawah, and still operates freely in Pakistan.

Pakistan has recently made several moves to reform ISI's reputation, in part to distance itself from the recurring accusations of supporting terrorism. The army chief replaced the ISI head in September, after Indian and U.S. officials linked the ISI to the July 2008 bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul. Last week, Pakistan's foreign minister said that the political arm of the spy agency, which has historically interfered in domestic politics and worked to destabilize Pakistani governments, had been disbanded. But it is still too early to tell if these moves will increase ISI's accountability to the elected government, or bring any major policy changes to an agency that has long interfered in the country's foreign policy.

One thing is clear: if the Mumbai attacks are linked to Pakistan, it will not only be a huge setback in the normalization of the two countries' relations, it will also make it much more difficult to put an end to the war in Afghanistan and bring stability to South Asia. The incoming Obama administration has been calling for a more regional approach to both problems, one that involves Indian participation and seeks to resolve the bitter Kashmir dispute. But if the latest turn of events leads to renewed tensions between India and Pakistan, the tough balancing act President-elect Obama must perform in the region will only get tougher.

Jayshree Bajoria is a staff writer on Asia for CFR.org, the website of the Council on Foreign Relations. Before coming to New York to get a Master's in international affairs from Columbia University, she worked as a reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in Mumbai, India.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=2980>

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The Wall Street Journal
DECEMBER 1, 2008, 1:06 P.M. ET

India Demands Action from Pakistan

By MATTHEW ROSENBERG and ERIC BELLMAN

MUMBAI, India -- With evidence of a Pakistani link to the attack on Mumbai growing, India demanded Monday that Islamabad hand over two important terror suspects and warned that relations between the nuclear-armed rivals would suffer if swift action isn't taken.

Indian officials told Pakistan's senior envoy to New Delhi of the demands after summoning him to the foreign ministry, said an official familiar with the meeting.

"He was informed that the recent terrorist attack on Mumbai was carried out by elements from Pakistan," the foreign ministry said in a statement after the meeting. India "expects that strong action would be taken against those elements, whosoever they may be, responsible for this outrage."

The two men India is pressing Pakistan to turn over have long topped New Delhi's most wanted list. They are Dawood Ibrahim, a one-time Mumbai gangster with ties to everyone from Bollywood power brokers to Islamic militants, and Maulana Masood Azhar, the leader of the banned Pakistani militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed, who was once jailed in India.

Both men have been accused of orchestrating previous attacks in India, but neither has been directly implicated in last week's assault on Mumbai that left at least 172 people dead and 239 wounded. Diplomats and political analysts say that suggests India is using the international outrage over the attack to pressure Pakistan for a broader crackdown against Islamist militant groups and individuals believed to be targeting India, which has suffered more than a dozen terror bombings in the past three years.

Tracking the Terrorists

Arriving by boat, a small team of terrorists spread out across Mumbai, instilling terror in India's largest city for three days.

There was no immediate reaction from Pakistan to the Indian demands.

India's political scene, meanwhile, was roiled for a second day as fallout from the bombings spread and a second senior politician resigned his post, while another offered to step down.

R.R. Patil, the man in charge of security in Maharashtra state, where Mumbai is located, resigned Monday. His boss, Maharashtra Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, also offered to quit, an offer the Congress party -- which leads India's ruling coalition government -- was considering. "If the responsibility of the attacks is on the chief minister, then I will go," he told reporters.

On Sunday, federal Home Minister Shivraj Patil, India's top internal security official, stepped down.

The sharp deterioration in relations between India and Pakistan after four years of peace talks threatens to undermine U.S. efforts to keep Islamabad focused on fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda, which have sunk deep roots along Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan. Thousands of Pakistani soldiers are battling the militants there, but the military has warned it will shift troops east to the Indian border if New Delhi makes any military moves on its side of the frontier.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday she expects Pakistan to cooperate fully with any investigation of the Mumbai attacks, something Islamabad has already said it will do as long as India gives it the evidence it has collected implicating Pakistani militants in the assault.

"What we are emphasizing to the Pakistani government is the need to follow the evidence wherever it leads," Ms. Rice told reporters in London. "I don't want to jump to any conclusions myself on this, but I do think that this is a time for complete, absolute, total transparency and cooperation and that's what we expect."

The U.S. fears tough talk from New Delhi could put Pakistan's 10-months-old civilian government, its first in almost a decade, on the defensive, a situation that could easily spiral out of control. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since they won independence from Britain in 1947, and almost had a fourth confrontation after a 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament killed 15 people.

Mr. Azhar's group, Jaish-e-Mohammed, was blamed for that attack along with another Pakistani militant outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba, the organization that Indian officials have publicly fingered for last week's assault on Mumbai.

Mr. Azhar was jailed by India in the 1990s. But authorities released him in 1999 in exchange for passengers on an Indian Airlines flight hijacked to Kandahar, Afghanistan. He then reportedly slipped back into Pakistan and founded Jaish, which quickly gained notoriety for its attacks on Indian forces in divided Kashmir, the predominately Muslim region at the center of the rivalry between India and Pakistan.

Under pressure from the U.S. following the Sept. 11 attacks, Pakistan banned Jaish. A few months later, Mr. Azhar was put under house arrest in Pakistan following the Indian Parliament attack. But he was quietly released in 2002 and his group, which is believed to have some links to al Qaeda, still operates in parts of Pakistan.

Jaish has also worked in the past with Mr. Ibrahim. A native of India, where he was a feared underworld boss, Mr. Ibrahim became a reputed financier of terrorism after he allegedly orchestrated about a dozen near simultaneous bombings and shootings in Mumbai in 1993. Those attacks killed 257 people. He's now believed to be living in Karachi, Pakistan, where he is said to run a number of businesses and own property.

—*Tariq Engineer contributed to this article.*

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122814383358268933.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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guardian.co.uk

US 'Warned India before Mumbai Attacks'

Unnamed Bush official's statement adds to criticism of Indian government's lack of preparedness

Vikram Dodd in Mumbai and Mark Tran

guardian.co.uk, Tuesday December 2 2008

The US warned India before the Mumbai attacks, a senior Bush administration official said today, fuelling criticism of the Indian government's lack of preparedness.

According to an unnamed official, the US told Indian officials that terrorists appeared to be plotting a water-borne attack on India's financial capital.

Several top Indian officials have resigned after the attacks that claimed at least 172 lives and injured more than 300. Vilasrao Deshmukh, the chief minister of Maharashtra state, yesterday became the latest official to offer his resignation over alleged warnings about terrorist activities that were not acted upon.

His deputy, RR Patil, also submitted his resignation after being quoted as downplaying the seriousness of the attacks. Their offers to go followed the resignation of the home minister on Sunday and came amid Indian media reports of a string of intelligence blunders, all of which are adding to an atmosphere that the government and state apparatus cannot cope with the scale and complexity of the security threat facing the country.

India has demanded that Pakistan hand over 20 militants it believes are in the neighbouring country amid fears that relations between the two nations will deteriorate following the Mumbai attacks.

But the Pentagon has seen no signs that Pakistan is preparing to shift troops out of its tribal region near the Afghanistan border due to rising tensions, a US defence official said.

"There are no indications that anything is happening. Nothing has happened or is planned to happen in that vein," the official told Reuters. "It's business as usual."

In India, recriminations after the Mumbai attacks have been rife.

An officer in the elite commando unit that ended the siege has told the Guardian his troops were delayed getting to the scene of the attacks because a plane could not initially be found to take them.

Major Vikram Singh, of the national security guard, said his unit, which is based in Delhi, took 10 hours to reach Mumbai. The NSG, nicknamed the Black Cats, have been feted by the Indian public after ending the siege. The criticism by a serving officer of his government is a sign of the anger politicians are facing after the attacks. Singh told the Guardian the delay may have let the terrorists gain more control of the two hotels and Jewish centre than they otherwise would have had.

Singh, who was speaking outside the Oberoi Trident hotel, said: "We've taken 10 hours to come from Delhi. Initially no one could judge the level of threat."

But the officer said his troops were ready to move 20 minutes after an order to deploy, and believes they were delayed by at least four hours in reaching the scene.

"In 20 minutes we could have started. The aircraft to take us was somewhere else."

Mumbai is 90 minutes by air from Delhi. Singh said an NSG unit should be based outside Delhi including in cities such as Mumbai: "Had we been in Mumbai, 30 minutes would have been enough to start the operation."

In a further sign of anger at India's elite, a senior politician seeking to attend the funeral of a commander killed in the fighting was refused permission by the commander's father.

Away from the recriminations there were signs yesterday that the death toll from the Taj Mahal Palace hotel may be less than feared. So far 23 bodies have been recovered, 19 Indian and four foreigners.

The trustee of a Muslim graveyard in Mumbai said yesterday that it would not bury the dead gunmen, with an official saying they are not true followers of the Islamic faith.

"People who committed this heinous crime cannot be called Muslim," said Hanif Nalkhande, a trustee of the Jamia Masjid Trust, which runs the three-hectare (7.5 acres) Bada Kabrastan graveyard in Mumbai. Meanwhile teams from Scotland Yard and the FBI have arrived to help the investigation. The British team will assist with the forensic investigation.

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/02/mumbai-terror-attacks-india>

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Washington Post

U.S., India Pressure Pakistan to Cooperate in Mumbai Probe

By Candace Rondeaux

Washington Post Foreign Service

Tuesday, December 2, 2008; A12

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Dec. 1 -- With tensions rising between India and Pakistan after the deadly attacks in Mumbai last week, the United States on Monday increased pressure on Pakistan to cooperate in the investigation, while Indian officials lodged a formal diplomatic protest with their South Asian neighbor, demanding strong action against those behind the assault.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the Bush administration is urging Pakistan's government to "follow the evidence wherever it leads," saying transparency is crucial to the investigation into the three-day siege that left at least 174 dead and nearly 300 wounded in the Indian mega-city of Mumbai. Rice, who is expected to travel to India to meet with leaders there Wednesday, said during a visit to London on Monday that the deaths of six Americans in the Mumbai attacks had heightened the U.S. stake in the outcome of the inquiry.

Rice's comments came as officials in the Indian capital, New Delhi, demanded that Pakistan take "strong action" against those who organized the assaults. Vishnu Prakash, spokesman for the Indian foreign ministry, said Pakistan's lead envoy in New Delhi had been summoned and told that "elements from Pakistan" were behind the coordinated attacks on 10 sites in Mumbai.

Other Indian officials have pointed the finger at the Pakistan-based guerrilla group Lashkar-i-Taiba. India has said the lone gunman captured in the attacks admitted to membership in Lashkar, which has origins in the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir. Joint Police Commissioner Rakesh Maria said gunman Azam Amir Kasab told investigators that he trained at a camp in Pakistan. Pakistan has rejected the claim, while Lashkar operatives have denied responsibility for the assaults.

U.S. officials on Monday largely corroborated India's assertions, with one counterterrorism official saying intelligence information showed that preparations for the attacks "were done within Pakistan." But U.S. officials also said they are convinced of the sincerity of the Pakistani government's insistence that it had no role in the assaults.

American diplomats were working Monday to dissuade India from lashing out at Pakistan or at insurgent groups based there, worried that such a strike might further inflame tensions and lead to violence. In response to a question about India at a news conference, President-elect Barack Obama reaffirmed that "sovereign nations, obviously, have a right to protect themselves." But he called for patience, saying it is "important for us to let the investigators do their jobs and make a determination in terms of who was responsible for carrying out these heinous acts."

Pakistan has said that it is willing to assist India with the investigation. But a senior Pakistani official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of diplomatic sensitivities, said the rising Indian backlash against Pakistan could derail an offer last week to send a senior official with the country's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) to aid India in the investigation.

"What has come back has been so negative that politically it would be very difficult -- for the National Assembly, for the military, for the Pakistani people -- to send someone," the official said. "The mood has changed so much from the first day of the attacks. We were sending our condolences, offering our cooperation, but now this backlash has made it hard for all of us."

Regional analysts and Pakistani officials say any successful collaboration between the two nuclear-armed rivals will depend as much on the Pakistani government's sway over its powerful intelligence agencies as it will on diplomatic signals from Washington and New Delhi.

During the late 1980s and 1990s, the ISI played a key role in organizing and arming militant groups such as Lashkar. Although Pakistan's government has officially banned Lashkar, military analysts say there is reason to think that elements within the ISI retain links to the group as well as to other extremist organizations, including the Taliban.

Pakistan's civilian government, led by President Asif Ali Zardari, has tried several times in recent months to bring the at-times rogue intelligence services under greater government control. Over the summer, there was an attempt to make the ISI answer to the Interior Ministry, where a key Zardari ally is in charge. That move failed. But in September, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Shuja Pasha was named to replace Lt. Gen. Nadeem Taj as head of the ISI amid suspicions in Washington that Taj supported Islamist extremists. And last month, the ISI, under government pressure, disbanded its long-feared political wing, which focused primarily on spying on Pakistani political figures.

U.S. officials have hailed Pasha's appointment as a step in the right direction, while experts say the Pakistani intelligence community as a whole has appeared in recent months less inclined to support extremist elements.

"There is no sign of confrontation between the ISI, the military and the government," said Muhammad Amir Rana, director of the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, an Islamabad-based research organization. "Overall the

institution is working with the government's agenda. But it's important to keep in mind that there might be a few members of the intelligence services that will resist this kind of change."

Yet some Pakistani defense experts said there are still indications that the ISI is not entirely under the government's command. "There is a communication gap between the civilian government and the military," said Ayesha Siddiqi, a Pakistani defense analyst. "Just because the faces have changed doesn't mean you control the whole machine."

India has been carrying out its own reshuffling of top officials amid widespread anger over perceived intelligence lapses and poor response times during last week's attacks. India's home minister resigned over the weekend, and there were more resignations Monday, including that of Vilasrao Deshmukh, the top official in Maharashtra state, which includes Mumbai.

India's newly appointed home minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram, vowed Monday to take action to ward off future attacks. "I want to assure the people on behalf of the government that we will respond with determination and resolve to the grave threat posed to the Indian nation," he told reporters. "I recognize that there is a sense of anguish and deep shock among the people of India. This is a threat to the very idea of India, very soul of India."

Staff writers Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung in Washington and correspondents Rama Lakshmi in New Delhi and Emily Wax in Mumbai contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/01/AR2008120102709.html>

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guardian.co.uk

Mumbai Attacks: India Demands Pakistan Hand Over Terror Suspects

Government plays down possibility of military action over mass killings in Mumbai

Vikram Dodd in Mumbai, Julian Borger and Mark Tran

guardian.co.uk, Tuesday December 2 2008

India today downplayed the possibility of military action in response to the Mumbai attacks but demanded that Islamabad hand over suspected terrorists believed to be in Pakistan.

"Nobody is talking of military action," India's foreign minister, Pranab Mukherjee, told reporters when asked what action might be taken.

Indian investigators have said the attacks that killed at least 172 people last week were carried out by militants from Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Kashmiri extremist group based in Pakistan.

Mukherjee said a list of about 20 names was given to Pakistan's high commissioner to India at a meeting last night. India has already demanded that Pakistan take "strong action" against those responsible for the attacks, and the US has put pressure on Islamabad to cooperate.

Amid fears of deteriorating relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pakistan's foreign minister, said that Pakistan wanted good relations with India and that now was not the time for a "blame game, taunts (and) finger-pointing".

Qureshi said Pakistan has offered a "joint investigative mechanism and joint commission ... We are ready to collectively reach the bottom of this and to compose a team which can help you."

Condoleezza Rice yesterday called for full Pakistani cooperation with the investigation into the Mumbai attacks, saying they represented a "critical moment" in the new civilian government's efforts to stamp its authority on Pakistan's security services.

The outgoing secretary of state said she did not want to "jump to conclusions", but made it clear during a visit to London that she expected Islamabad would have to answer for the attacks.

Rice, who is due to arrive in India tomorrow, urged its government to focus on the investigation of the attacks, and to avoid actions that might have "unintended consequences", such as troop manoeuvres.

The Indian government has claimed the attackers trained in Pakistan.

Islamabad has denied any involvement, but has warned that it might have to transfer forces from its western tribal areas, where they are fighting Islamic extremist groups, to its eastern border with India if there were threatening moves by Indian troops.

The Indian authorities have been releasing parts of their case against Pakistan to the media. Yesterday Indian media reported intelligence sources as saying an email claiming responsibility for the attack had been traced to an internet address in Lahore.

There were signs yesterday that India was winning the diplomatic tussle. A western diplomatic source said India's claims that extremist elements in Pakistan were involved in the attack were being widely believed, and that Pakistan's warning that it would have to move troops away from the Afghan border was being interpreted as "a threat" to western interests.

Speaking to reporters in London yesterday, Rice directed most of her remarks to the newly elected government of President Asif Ali Zardari.

"President Zardari has said rightly that extremism in any form is a threat to Pakistan as well as India. So I fully expect the commitment of Pakistan to absolute transparency and wherever the leads go, to follow them up," Rice said.

The civilian government's control over Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) came into question last week when the prime minister, Yousef Raza Gilani, announced he would dispatch the agency's new director general, Lieutenant General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, to India to discuss the attack, only for the offer to be withdrawn within hours. A more junior ISI representative was promised instead.

Most foreign observers believe at least some ISI officers still harbour sympathy for Islamic extremist groups and turn a blind eye to their terrorist activities.

Rice did not mention the ISI yesterday but made clear she believed the time had come for Pakistan's government to ensure different parts of its security apparatus were not pursuing separate agendas.

"Everyone knows that you don't have day one with a military government and day two with a civilian government," Rice said. "But this is a critical moment for Pakistan to bring all its institutions into a common strategy to defend Pakistan. And defending Pakistan means rooting out extremism, defending Pakistani interests means cooperating fully, defending Pakistani interests means investigating this so further attacks can be prevented."

Rice said she was flying to New Delhi tomorrow "to show solidarity" and offer help with the investigation and counter-terrorism measures. She would also be discouraging the escalation of the situation.

India's high commissioner in London said last night the attacks were "probably" aimed at derailing peace talks between India and Pakistan, which had been given a boost by the election of a new democratic government in Islamabad.

Shiv Shankar Mukherjee told Sky News that India had made no "aggressive moves" since the attack, but warned that the peace process between the two countries was "under pressure".

But he added that "over the last few months we've been having a terrorist attack virtually every month in India. And we've leaned over backwards and have gone the extra mile ... to see that the dialogue succeeds, because there is no alternative, except peaceful dialogue to resolve our problems."

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/02/mumbai-attack-india-pakistan>

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The Australian

Military Chiefs Urge Raid inside Pakistan

December 03, 2008

PAKISTAN was bracing last night for a retaliatory airstrike by India against the sprawling headquarters of the al-Qa'ida-linked Lashkar-e-Toiba terrorist organisation near Lahore.

As Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari warned the LET militants "had the power to precipitate war in the region", India demanded that Islamabad hand over a list of about 20 people, including India's most-wanted man Dawood Ibrahim.

India's military chiefs were exerting strong pressure on the country's political leaders to give permission to attack the headquarters, an 80ha site at Muridke, close to the Punjab capital of Lahore, just across the border from India.

The reports came as the Indian Government summoned the Pakistani high commissioner in New Delhi yesterday to demand "strong action" against the Pakistani militants who it says were responsible for last week's attacks on Mumbai.

New Delhi warned Shahid Malik that India expected Islamabad to take "swift action" to deal with the evidence of involvement by LET operating from bases inside Pakistan.

India demanded that Islamabad extradite Ibrahim, a fugitive Mumbai mafia don who it believes has links to LET, the terrorist group long allied to Pakistan's ISI spy agency.

India also asked for Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, the LET founder, and Maulana Masood Azhar, the head of militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, who was freed in exchange for passengers on a hijacked Indian Airlines flight in 1999.

Ibrahim, Mumbai's most notorious underworld don, is the head of D-Company, a feared crime syndicate, and one of the world's five most wanted men. He is widely believed to have worked closely with al-Qa'ida. He is also thought to have masterminded the 1993 Mumbai bombings, a series of 13 explosions that claimed 250 lives.

New Delhi issued its demands after US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Pakistan to co-operate with India as she prepared to visit New Delhi to mediate between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

The heavily guarded LET complex near Lahore, known as the Markaz-e-Taiba (Holy Centre), includes mosques and madrassas with more than 3000 students. Theoretically it is the headquarters of the Jamaat-ul-Dawah Muslim welfare organisation that is closely identified with LET.

Saeed, the LET founder and spiritual leader, lives in the complex.

Reports yesterday said that if India attacked the complex -- possibly to kill Saeed -- an attempt would be made to justify the action by pointing to the way in which the US was launching pre-emptive strikes inside Pakistani territory using unmanned drones to kill al-Qa'ida and Taliban targets.

Indian sources have confirmed that investigators have established strong links between the group of terrorists who attacked Mumbai and the LET leadership inside Pakistan.

Intercepts of calls made on a satellite telephone used by the group before they disembarked from the "mother ship" that brought them from Karachi shows a series of calls made to Muridke.

Indian officials said that all the militants were from Pakistan and that the only one captured alive had admitted to being part of LET.

Yesterday, the surviving terrorist, Ajmal Amin Kamal, in a new interrogation by Indian investigators, again linked the Mumbai attack to LET, saying he had joined the organisation at the behest of his father to raise money for his family.

He named an LET commander who, he said, paid his father for his services.

Pakistan reluctantly announced a formal ban on LET in 2002 after coming under strong international pressure to clamp down on the organisation. This followed a spectacular attack on the Indian parliament in December 2001, launched by LET together with the Kashmir-based JEM.

Although still technically outlawed in Pakistan, LET has managed to expand its membership and activities and has also established itself in other countries.

To get around the formal ban on its activities, LET renamed itself Jamaat-ud-Dawah, which gained considerable influence across Pakistan as a result of the "welfare" work it did after the devastating 2005 earthquake in Kashmir. The US Government has also classified Jamaat-ud-Dawah as a terrorist organisation and said it is no more than an "alias" of LET.

Indian investigators are convinced there is no doubt of LET's involvement in the Mumbai outrage.

Mr Zardari insisted the militants who attacked Mumbai were "non-state actors" with no links to any government.

Reports yesterday said India received warnings in October from US intelligence of a possible terrorist attack "from the sea" on targets in Mumbai.

Unnamed American intelligence officials told US television news service ABC that they had warned their Indian counterparts in mid-October of a potential attack "from the sea against hotels and business centres in Mumbai".

One intelligence official even mentioned specific targets, including the Taj Mahal hotel, ABC said.

Additional reporting: The Times

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24743163-2703,00.html>

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Wall Street Journal
November 29, 2008
Pg. 6

IAEA Broadens Probe of Syria Plans to Build Up its Nuclear Program

By Jay Solomon

VIENNA -- The United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is broadening its probe of Syria's suspected nuclear program and pushing for information from its alleged collaborator, North Korea, as well as from Israel, officials said this past week.

Despite signs that the U.S. and Israel aren't in a punitive mood toward Damascus, the suspected nuclear program is emerging as a major international issue.

The IAEA's probe places the incoming Obama administration in a difficult spot diplomatically. President-elect Barack Obama has indicated his desire to engage Syria, but he also backs global antiproliferation efforts.

Israeli jets destroyed a suspected Syrian nuclear facility in September 2007. U.S. intelligence agencies said that at the time, the facility was weeks from being operational. Syria has denied it was building a nuclear reactor, and suggested that uranium particles found there by U.N. inspectors in June came from Israeli bombs.

Earlier this week, the IAEA sent a letter to Jerusalem seeking clarification on whether Israeli bombs could have been the source of the uranium particles, U.N. officials and Western diplomats said. An Israeli official declined to comment.

The Central Intelligence Agency has alleged that North Korea was the principal designer and builder of the Syrian facility, known as Al Kibar.

A senior U.N. official close to the investigation said the IAEA is hoping to learn more through the disarmament talks between North Korea, the U.S. and other powers. North Korea's alleged role in exporting nuclear technologies to third countries is a principal focus of the talks.

Damascus has refused to allow the IAEA to visit at least three other sites suspected of being linked to the Al Kibar complex. It has so far ruled out additional visits to Syria by agency officials.

"We will not allow another visit," Ibrahim Othman, the head of Syria's Atomic Energy Commission, told reporters at IAEA headquarters in Vienna on Nov. 21. "No other country would allow any person to visit a restricted military site, just because he would like to see it."

U.N. officials said the investigation has been hampered by the August assassination of Syrian Brig. Gen. Mohammed Suleiman, the IAEA's principal contact in Damascus. The officials said Gen. Suleiman oversaw the IAEA's access to suspected Syrian sites, as well as briefings by Syria to the IAEA inspectors. "We don't have a new source" of contact inside Syria, said the senior U.N. official.

Another snag was cited by IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei this week. He said the agency has had trouble obtaining commercial satellite images of the Syrian site in the weeks after the Israeli attack, perhaps because someone bought them up. "It is regrettable, and indeed baffling, that imagery for this critical period...was not available," Mr. ElBaradei told the IAEA's board of governors on Wednesday.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied its role in the Syria attack. A U.N. official said investigators found no traces of depleted uranium -- the normal form of uranium found in munitions -- at Al Kibar, but said he couldn't rule out that other forms of uranium may have been used in the Israeli bombs dropped on the site.

U.N. officials said the IAEA hasn't found evidence so far that uranium from a North Korean nuclear facility at Yongbyon was diverted to Syria. The IAEA hasn't ruled out that the uranium could have come from a separate North Korean site, and is looking into whether it came from a third country.

The Bush administration has regularly stated its desire to cooperate with Damascus on the nuclear issue and avoid the type of U.N. sanctions imposed on Iran in response to Tehran's dispute with the IAEA over nuclear inspections.

"Syria is not Iran, and we do not seek to make Syria into Iran," said Gregory Schulte, the U.S. representative to the IAEA, last week. "But this requires Syria to cooperate with the IAEA."

<http://sbk.online.wsj.com/article/SB122792135584465829.html>

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Wall Street Journal

December 1, 2008

Pg. 16

Tehran Welcomes U.S. Talks

By Jay Solomon

VIENNA -- Iran's top diplomat for nuclear issues said his government would welcome a broad dialogue with U.S. President-elect Barack Obama's administration, but offered few signs that Tehran is willing to slow its expanding nuclear program.

Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Ali Ashgar Soltanieh, said in an interview that if Mr. Obama makes good on his campaign pledge to drop preconditions on talks with Tehran, it could pave the way for a significant cooling of tensions between the U.S. and Iran.

"If these changes are really genuine, and not cosmetic, then there would be optimism that there would be a change" in U.S. foreign policy, Mr. Soltanieh said at IAEA headquarters here. "We are fully prepared to sit at the negotiating table with all countries provided that there are no conditions and all are on equal footing."

The IAEA reported last month a significant expansion of Iran's nuclear program, which the U.S. says is for atomic weapons but Tehran says is for peaceful purposes. The IAEA reported that Iran had produced 630 kilograms of low-enriched uranium through the operation of roughly 4,000 centrifuges, and was on the path to produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale as thousands of additional centrifuges come online.

Mr. Obama has repeatedly said that the U.S. should engage Tehran on the nuclear issue without any preconditions, such as Iran's freezing of enrichment activities. If Iran refuses to relent on its nuclear program despite such diplomatic overtures, it would bear the blame for international tensions, he has said.

Low-enriched uranium needs additional processing to be converted into the weapons-grade material used in a nuclear bomb. IAEA officials estimate Iran would need to roughly double its current stockpile of low-enriched uranium, and to process it further, to have enough fissile material to produce one atomic weapon.

Mr. Soltanieh said Tehran plans to continue enriching uranium despite United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding a cessation and international economic sanctions. He stressed that IAEA safeguards ensure against any diversion of these materials for military purposes, an argument the U.S. and other Western nations dispute.

"There is now a number of 5,000 centrifuges. And this program is continuing without any interruption," Mr. Soltanieh said. "While this enrichment continues, the cameras of the IAEA are 24 hours monitoring every move and every gram of uranium."

The recent IAEA report criticized Tehran for not answering questions about allegations that Iran has studied ways to weaponize its nuclear program. Intelligence provided to the IAEA by the U.S. and other governments indicates that Tehran explored ways to design nuclear warheads and triggering devices.

<http://sec.online.wsj.com/article/SB122807823545467285.html>

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Tehran Times
Monday, 1 December 2008

5,000 Centrifuges Operational at Natanz Nuclear Plant

Tehran Times Political Desk

TEHRAN – The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Deputy Director, Mohammad Saeedi, confirmed reports that Iran is now running 5,000 uranium enrichment centrifuges at Natanz nuclear power plant. He also said the construction of the dome of Arak nuclear power plant has been finalized, adding that the construction process and all equipment are under the full supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. On the Bushehr nuclear power plant, Saeedi said most of equipment for the power station has been imported and Iran is on the final stages of setting them up. He said the Russian contractor has pledged to finalize the project in 2009, expressing hope that the power plant will become operational next year

http://www.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=183717

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RIA Novosti

Iran Proposes Building Nuclear Power Plants with Arab States

30 November 2008

TEHRAN, November 30 (RIA Novosti) - Iran on Sunday proposed building light-water nuclear power plants jointly with neighboring Arab countries.

The proposal was put forward by Gholamreza Agazadeh, Iranian vice-president and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, who spoke at a conference on nuclear power plants, environment and sustainable development.

"Iran is ready to provide very soon a comprehensive plan for the proposal if it were approved in generalities by the Persian Gulf littoral states," the Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Agazadeh as saying.

Iran is under three sets of relatively mild UN Security Council sanctions over its controversial nuclear program, which it insists has purely civilian goals. Western powers led by the United States, along with Israel, accuse Tehran of attempting to develop nuclear weapons, something Iran has consistently denied.

Iran is completing the construction of its first nuclear power plant at Bushehr in the south of the country with the assistance of Russian specialists. The \$1bn project is subject to UN monitoring following Iran's refusal to halt its uranium enrichment program and Western suspicions that Tehran is seeking to build nuclear weapons.

The Bushehr nuclear power plant is expected to be launched in the first half of 2009.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20081130/118614547.html>

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RIA Novosti

Iran to Build New Nuclear Plants Instead of 2nd Unit at Bushehr

1 December 2008

TEHRAN, December 1 (RIA Novosti) - Iranian authorities are planning to build two new nuclear power plants instead of completing the second power unit of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, a civilian nuclear official said on Monday. Work on the first unit of the Bushehr nuclear power plant in the south of Iran is in its final stage. Iran had previously planned to build at least another two power units at the plant.

"Our organization has decided to build two new plants with a capability of 1,000 MW each instead of completing the second unit of the Bushehr nuclear power plant," the IRNA news agency quoted Ahmad Fayyazbakhsh, deputy head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, as saying. The new plants would be close to the Bushehr plant.

The official specified that constructing new nuclear power plants would be more efficient from an economic and technical viewpoint. Iran is completing the construction of its first nuclear power plant under a 1995 contract with Russia. The \$1 billion project is expected to be launched in the first half of 2009. The project was originally started by Germany's Siemens in 1975 and envisaged the construction of two units, but work stopped following the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

<http://en.rian.ru/world/20081201/118628823.html>

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Washington Times

December 2, 2008

Pg. 11

Air Chief Claims Radar-Evading Plane

TEHRAN -- Iran has designed a radar-evading aircraft, the head of its air force said Monday, the Islamic republic's latest announcement of progress on military hardware amid persistent tension with the West over its nuclear plans. Brig. Gen. Hassan Shahsafi was also quoted as saying the air force had test-fired a new, Iranian-made air-to-air heat-seeking missile with a range of 25 miles, saying it could be extended to 60 miles. Iran often says it has made advances in its arms, but Western analysts say it is tough to assess the claims as few details are usually released.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/02/world-scene-65254253/?page=2>

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Cyber-Attack on Defense Department Computers Raises Concerns

The 'malware' strike, thought to be from inside Russia, hit combat zone computers and the U.S. Central Command overseeing Iraq and Afghanistan. The attack underscores concerns about computer warfare.

By Julian E. Barnes

Reporting from Washington — Senior military leaders took the exceptional step of briefing President Bush this week on a severe and widespread electronic attack on Defense Department computers that may have originated in Russia -- an incursion that posed unusual concern among commanders and raised potential implications for national security.

Defense officials would not describe the extent of damage inflicted on military networks. But they said that the attack struck hard at networks within U.S. Central Command, the headquarters that oversees U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, and affected computers in combat zones. The attack also penetrated at least one highly protected classified network.

Military computers are regularly beset by outside hackers, computer viruses and worms. But defense officials said the most recent attack involved an intrusive piece of malicious software, or "malware," apparently designed specifically to target military networks.

"This one was significant; this one got our attention," said one defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity when discussing internal assessments.

Although officials are withholding many details, the attack underscores the increasing danger and potential significance of computer warfare, which defense experts say could one day be used by combatants to undermine even a militarily superior adversary.

Bush was briefed on the threat by Navy Adm. Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Mullen also briefed Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates.

Military electronics experts have not pinpointed the source or motive of the attack and could not say whether the destructive program was created by an individual hacker or whether the Russian government may have had some involvement. Defense experts may never be able to answer such questions, officials said.

The defense official said the military also had not learned whether the software's designers may have been specifically targeting computers used by troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, suspicions of Russian involvement come at an especially delicate time because of sagging relations between Washington and Moscow and growing tension over U.S. plans to develop a missile defense system in Eastern Europe. The two governments also have traded charges of regional meddling after U.S. support for democratic elections in former Soviet states and recent Russian overtures in Latin America.

U.S. officials have worried in recent years about the possibility of cyber-attacks from other countries, especially China and Russia, whether sponsored by governments of those countries or launched by individual computer experts.

An electronic attack from Russia shut down government computers in Estonia in 2007. And officials believe that a series of electronic attacks were launched against Georgia at the same time that hostilities erupted between Moscow and Tbilisi last summer. Russia has denied official involvement in the Georgia attacks.

The first indication that the Pentagon was dealing with a computer problem came last week, when officials banned the use of external computer flash drives. At the time, officials did not indicate the extent of the attack or the fact that it may have targeted defense systems or posed national security concerns.

The invasive software, known as agent.btz, has circulated among nongovernmental U.S. computers for months. But only recently has it affected the Pentagon's networks. It is not clear whether the version responsible for the cyber-intrusion of classified networks is the same as the one affecting other computer systems.

The malware is able to spread to any flash drive plugged into an infected computer. The risk of spreading the malware to other networks prompted the military to ban the drives.

Defense officials acknowledged that the worldwide ban on external drives was a drastic move. Flash drives are used constantly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and many officers keep them loaded with crucial information on lanyards around their necks.

Banning their use made sharing information in the war theaters more difficult and reflected the severity of the intrusion and the threat from agent.btz, a second official said.

Officials would not describe the exact threat from agent.btz, or say whether it could shut down computers or steal information. Some computer experts have reported that agent.btz can allow an attacker to take control of a computer remotely and to take files and other information from it.

In response to the attack, the U.S. Strategic Command, which oversees the military's cyberspace defenses, has raised the security level for its so-called information operations condition, or "INFOCON," initiating enhanced security measures on military networks.

The growing possibility of future electronic conflicts has touched off debates among U.S. defense experts over how to train and utilize American computer warfare specialists. Some have advocated creating offensive capabilities, allowing the U.S. to develop the ability to intrude into the networks of other countries.

But most top leaders believe the U.S. emphasis in cyberspace should be on improving defenses and gathering intelligence, particularly about potential threats.

On Tuesday, Gen. Norton A. Schwartz, Air Force chief of staff, received a specialized briefing about the malware attack. Officers from the Air Force Network Operations Center at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana outlined their efforts to halt the spread of the malware and to protect military computers from further attack.

Schwartz, praising those efforts, said that the attack and the military's response were being closely monitored by senior military leaders.

The offending program has been cleansed from a number of military networks. But officials said they did not believe they had removed every bit of infection from all Defense Department computers.

"There are lots of people working hard to remove the threat and put in preventive measures to protect the grid," said the defense official. "We have taken a number of corrective measures, but I would be overstating it if I said we were through this."

Barnes is a writer in our Washington bureau.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-cyberattack28-2008nov28.0.6441140.story>

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