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New York Times

February 23, 2008

Pg. 7

North Korea Allows Access To Reactor

YONGBYON, North Korea (AP) — The broadcaster APTN, the international television division of The Associated Press, was permitted on Friday to visit the North Korean nuclear reactor in Yongbyon, the heart of the North's nuclear program.

At the site, 60 miles north of Pyongyang, the capital, Yongbyon's chief engineer reiterated the government's position that it was disabling the reactor as promised in the disarmament-for-aid deal, but that it had slowed down its compliance because the other countries were not meeting their commitments.

APTN showed North Korean workers in protective suits removing spent nuclear fuel from the facility's reactor. The visit came as talks have stalled over differences on whether the North has fully declared its nuclear programs under an October deal reached with the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea.

"It has been slowed down," said the chief engineer, Yu Sun-chol. "Especially the discharge of fuel rods from the core has been slowed down."

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/23/world/asia/23korea.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=North+Korea+Allows+Access+To+Reactor&st=nyt&oref=slogin

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Los Angeles Times

February 23, 2008

The ICBM Turns 50

A cheerful note on a grim anniversary: They still haven't been fired.

To the voluminous list of ironies that attended the Cold War doctrine of mutually assured destruction, we can add one more. On its 50th birthday, the intercontinental ballistic missile, that once-commanding symbol of the apocalypse, has become a national security underdog, a defense system whose future is uncertain, whose ranks are dwindling and whose utility in the 21st century is in serious question. That might gladden aging peaceniks whose Volvos sported "Nuclear weapons: May they rust in peace" bumper stickers during the Reagan era, but these days hawks and doves are equally likely to regard the ICBM with suspicion.

Consider the numbers. From a 1969 peak of 1,054, the Air Force now fields 450 missiles. Within the last three years the United States has retired 100 ICBMs, including the entire run of Peacekeepers, which began life as the controversial "MX" missile in the '70s. Mighty Vandenberg Air Force Base, where the first nuclear-tipped Atlas rocket facilities were built in 1958, lives on as a spaceport and missile testing facility, but today 22 square miles of mostly undeveloped coastal land in Santa Barbara County look more like a lost opportunity in real estate than an urgent military asset. The last Titan II rocket (decommissioned from missile duty in 1987) took off from Vandenberg in 2003, carrying a payload for the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program; the three-stage Minuteman (1962-) is now the only land-based ICBM in the U.S. arsenal. Much of the action in America's ongoing wars is conducted by unmanned aerial vehicles, and the Air Force is engaged in various great debates about next-generation weapons, including the very interesting question of whether piloted fighters and bombers have any future. How can the ICBM help but seem like the last Hula Hoop in the age of the RipStik?

During a recent visit to Vandenberg to help mark the semi-centennial of nuclear-tipped missiles, Maj. Gen. Thomas F. Deppe made a compelling case for the ICBM. Wearing boots and digital camouflage and speaking without notes or coffee in a windowless office, the burly vice commander of Air Force Space Command at Colorado's Peterson Air Force Base acknowledged the waning of the fleet but pointed out that the ICBM remains a vital deterrent, at least to clearly delineated state-to-state war: "The beauty of the ICBM is that it tremendously complicates matters for any adversary attacking this country."

Is that true, though? After all, the nuclear umbrella doesn't seem to have complicated the first foreign assault on U.S. soil of the 21st century. But Deppe, who began his Air Force career as an enlisted instrumentation technician in 1967 and has worked in missiles for most of his adult life, points not to the attacks that occurred on Sept. 11, 2001, but to the many that didn't occur in the 50 years before that. "The lesson of the Cold War is that strategic deterrence works," Deppe said. "There are a number of nations, and unfortunately that number is on the rise, that are developing nuclear capability, that have ballistic missile capability that can reach this country. The question of deterrence, and how much is enough, goes back to my earliest years in the Air Force. And really, it's impossible to measure how much is enough. You'll know if you don't have enough, but you'll never know if you have too much. Is 450 the right number? Apparently it is, because we're deterring aggressors. But is 449 not enough?"

Don't expect to find out any time soon. The Air Force is completing a \$7-billion upgrade of its Minuteman assets, a "nosecone to nozzle" spiffing up that will keep the missile in place until about 2030. What will come after that? Strategic Command has been considering the possibility of conventional ICBMs for years. In planning for an eventual Minuteman replacement, the Air Force is looking for smarter, more accurate delivery systems, but it is not ignoring the continuing value of being able to deliver nasty surprises from outer space. "The ICBM remains the single most prompt weapon we have," Deppe noted. "It can reach out and touch somebody anywhere in the world in 45 minutes."

Which lends one cheerful note to this grim anniversary: In all these years, the things still haven't been used. Unlike carrier fleets or rapid-deployment forces, the ICBM was not about power projection or foreign intervention but about persuading a lethal adversary not to attack the U.S. The strangest possible outcome of mutually assured destruction was the one that came to pass: Two political and economic systems competed without coming to blows, and the better system prevailed. That's no less astounding now than it was in the '90s -- or for that matter the '50s, when those missileers first went underground with their little keys, awaiting orders that never came.

--Tim Cavanaugh

<http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-ed-icbm23feb23.0,1811936.story>

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New York Times
February 25, 2008
Pg. 8

Iran Stepping Up Its Uranium Work

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran said Sunday that it had started using new centrifuges that can enrich uranium at more than twice the speed of the machines that now form the backbone of its nuclear program.

The announcement confirmed reports earlier this month by diplomats with the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency that Iran was using 10 of the new IR-2 centrifuges.

"We are running a new generation of centrifuges," said Javad Vaidi, deputy secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, according to the official IRNA news agency. No further details were provided.

Meanwhile, a senior Iranian official blamed the United States for Iran's refusal to respond to an International Atomic Energy Agency investigation into whether Iran tried to make nuclear weapons in the past. Ali Ashgar Soltanieh, Iran's chief delegate to the agency, said information provided to the agency by Washington was fake and came to Iran too late for a proper review.

The United States dismissed the complaint, saying Iran could have answered concerns about its nuclear program years ago.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/25/world/middleeast/25iran.html?scp=1&sq=Iran+Stepping+Up+Its+Uranium+Work&st=nyt>

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Jakarta Post
February 26, 2008

Bird Flu As Biological Weapon 'Nutty' Idea, Says Gates

By Jakarta Post

JAKARTA--United States Defense Secretary Robert Gates has denied allegations by Indonesia's Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari that his country is developing biological weapons from bird flu strains found in Indonesia.

"I think it's the nuttiest idea I've ever heard," Gates said Monday after addressing his speech to the Indonesian Council on World Affairs at the Four Seasons Hotel, South Jakarta.

Siti's book, *It's Time for the World to Change, Divine Hands Behind Bird Flu*, alleges the U.S. and the World Health Organization are conspiring against developing countries by seizing control of bird flu samples.

The book says virus samples being sent to a laboratory in Los Alamos are under U.S. military control.

After meeting with President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono at the State Palace, Gates said he did not discuss the issue with the President.

"I respectfully and strongly disagree with the minister, and it is not true that the United States offered military equipment if the book was withdrawn," he said in response to allegations that the U.S. would provide military aid for Indonesia as long as the English version of the book was withdrawn.

Presidential spokesman Dino Pati Djalal said any claim the U.S. designed the virus as a biological weapon was a personal view of the minister and not the President.

U.S. State Department spokeswoman Susan Stahl recently denied Siti's claim.

Recently, Siti said she was pulling the English version of the book from distribution after less than a month, citing inaccurate translations as the main reason.

The book was launched on Feb. 6 and is a 182-page memoir recording Siti's struggle to change the allegedly unfair virus sample sharing.

She claimed the system was not transparent and did not accommodate the needs of developing nations.

The Indonesian government decided to stop sharing virus samples early last year following a perceived leakage in the GISN as vaccine makers in developed countries could obtain samples sent by Indonesia to produce bird flu vaccines.

However, the government resumed sharing last week and sent 12 samples to the Center for Disease Control and Protection in Atlanta, Georgia.

<http://www.thejakartapost.com/detailgeneral.asp?fileid=20080225221623&irec=7>

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Moscow Times
February 26, 2008
Pg. 3

Prague To Strike Deal To Host U.S. Radar In Days

By Karel Janicek, Associated Press

PRAGUE, Czech Republic -- Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolaneck said Monday that he would conclude a deal on missile defense during talks this week in Washington.

The United States wants to place a radar system in the Czech Republic and 10 missile interceptors in Poland as part of a system it says is necessary to protect the United States and Europe against future attacks.

"We have reached a stage that we are able to complete the talks during my visit to America," Topolaneck said in an interview Monday. He meets with U.S. President George W. Bush at the White House on Wednesday.

The U.S. and Czech governments have been in talks for a year about the plan to place a missile-tracking radar at the Brdy military zone southwest of Prague.

Topolaneck said he could not see "any serious problems that would prevent us from completing the treaties" this week but added that final agreement would not come until the Poles were fully satisfied with the project.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Sunday that he supported the missile defense project -- but on condition that Washington should help to modernize Poland's military defenses in return. Tusk will visit Washington from March 8 to 10.

Three weeks ago, Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski said Poland and the United States had reached an agreement in principle, after he received assurances that Washington would help Warsaw strengthen its short- to medium-range air defenses.

Details remain to be worked out, however. Neither side would elaborate on Sikorski's statement, and it remained unclear whether the United States had made specific promises to provide air defense systems.

Defense Minister Bogdan Klich said in comments published Saturday that Poland's main expectations concerning U.S. aid were tied to air defense but added that Warsaw has also identified 17 areas where its military needs an upgrade.

Russia fiercely opposes the prospect of U.S. installations so close to its borders and has threatened to target any future base in Poland with its missiles, causing deep anxiety in Warsaw.

Topolaneck said Moscow's objections were partly due to its eroded influence in the region. "The loss of Central Europe was considered fatal and they protested our entry into NATO in a similar fashion," Topolaneck said, adding that Moscow was renewing "efforts to become a world superpower."

He emphasized the missile shield would be a "purely defensive" system that "is not aimed at the huge military arsenal of the Russian Federation."

<http://www.moscowtimes.ru/stories/2008/02/26/012.html>

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Washington Post
February 26, 2008
Pg. 12

Major Powers Discuss Iran Strategy

Hope Is to Lure Nation to Talks Without Overdoing Incentives

By Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writer

After two years of faltering diplomatic efforts, the United States and the world's other major powers met yesterday to discuss new inducements to lure Iran to the negotiating table for talks on its disputed nuclear program, according to officials involved in the initiative.

The meeting here among representatives of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States focused on possible new overtures, such as international help with Iran's growing narcotics crisis, deals on energy field exploitation and support for security talks among the oil-rich Persian Gulf nations, said the sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because diplomacy is ongoing. The goal of the new economic and security incentives is to persuade Iran to finally suspend uranium enrichment, a process that can be used for both peaceful nuclear energy and the production of deadly weapons.

The Bush administration is prepared to consider new outreach but is hesitant to go too far, mainly out of concern that Tehran will conclude that delays help it win concessions from the international community. "These are all European ideas, and the U.S. took a very conservative stance," a senior State Department official said. One of the

proposals rejected outright was that the United States be party to security guarantees for Iran, an official in the talks said.

Also under discussion, said officials present at the talks, was how to circumvent loyalists to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who have rejected all international overtures, and reach out to officials close to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who have indicated a willingness to negotiate.

European representatives proposed many of the ideas when the Bush administration agreed in 2006 to join a European initiative to reach out to Iran with both carrots and sticks. Washington originally rebuffed most of the ideas, but with less than a year left to achieve one of its top foreign policy objectives, the Bush administration is prepared to explore such options to "reinvigorate" the deadlocked effort, the U.S. official said.

The six powers hope to wrap up this week a U.N. resolution imposing new sanctions on Tehran, the sources said. At yesterday's meeting, the six nations also drafted a communique to be released when the resolution is passed that will "reaffirm" a "keen interest" in negotiations with Iran, the U.S. official said.

"You have to strengthen all the instruments you have, both sanctions and incentives," a European diplomat said.

"The idea with the third resolution is to increase sanctions, but incentives are part of the philosophy."

But the new sanctions resolution -- a sequel to those in December 2006 and March 2007 that targeted Iranian banks, senior officials and military industries -- faces an uphill battle. The draft is guaranteed passage because it has the support of the five permanent U.N. Security Council members, but it does not have the unanimity of previous resolutions, which won approval from all 15 council members.

The six powers that met in Washington yesterday are concerned that any dissent on the Security Council would lead Iran to believe it has begun to crack international resolve, officials present at the talks said.

"That's why it should not be a sweeter package, but a reasonable one that makes them understand it's the best thing to get to the negotiating table. That's what it's about," said a second European diplomat party to the talks. "Does it make them think we're running after them? That's not what it's about."

Four of the non-permanent Security Council members -- South Africa, Libya, Indonesia and Vietnam -- have expressed reservations about additional sanctions on Iran. The permanent members and Germany plan to spend the week pressing them to accede, possibly changing the resolution to reflect their concerns. The resolution has already been significantly weakened -- it merely calls for vigilance and makes most punitive measures voluntary -- compared with the original U.S.-backed draft last fall.

The goal of the six powers is to get a vote by Friday, before Russia takes over from Panama as president of the Security Council. Moscow, which has important trade ties with Iran and built its first nuclear reactor, does not want to oversee the vote, officials said.

The timing of the carrot-and-stick diplomacy is pegged to Iran's March 14 parliamentary elections, diplomats said. The goal is to have the U.N. resolution in place before the vote, with new overtures to Tehran agreed upon among the six powers within six weeks to two months after the vote.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/25/AR2008022502900.html>

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Washington Times

Foreign

U.S. urges eyeing flow of nuclear materials

By Nicholas Kralev

February 26, 2008

SEOUL — The United States wants six-nation talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear programs to begin monitoring transfers of nuclear materials and technology from the North to other countries, U.S. officials said yesterday.

The anti-proliferation focus, for which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is trying to gather support during an East Asian tour this week, is a response to mounting evidence that the North gave nuclear assistance to Syria.

"The North Koreans promised not to engage in nuclear proliferation," said Christopher R. Hill, the chief U.S. envoy to the six-nation talks. "We want to make sure they follow through on their pledge."

Mr. Hill was referring to an October agreement in which the North "reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology or know-how."

All five countries negotiating with the communist state — the United States, China, Japan, South Korea and Russia — have said that they expect Pyongyang to honor its promise.

The Oct. 3 deal, however, did not specify how the nonproliferation pledge would be verified.

Now the Bush administration, alarmed by the Syrian connection, is pushing for "monitoring" the implementation of North Korea's pledge.

In September, an Israeli air strike targeted what was widely reported to be a nuclear facility in Syria under construction with help from North Korea.

Miss Rice told reporters on Friday that she will discuss during her trip to South Korea, China and Japan "how we use the six-party framework to address proliferation issues."

"I'm of the mind that we have the right group of countries at that table, with the right set of incentives and disincentives to address not just denuclearization, which obviously is extremely important, but also proliferation," she said.

Japan and Russia are already members of the U.S.-sponsored "Proliferation Security Initiative," a voluntary agreement to share intelligence on illicit trade in deadly weapons. China, South Korea and North Korea — the primary target of the effort — have refused to join.

The U.S. initiated the program to avoid the repeat of a 2002 incident, in which it allowed 15 North Korean scud missiles to reach Yemen.

The missiles had been seized by a Spanish ship acting on U.S. intelligence, but the Bush administration decided it lacked authority under international law to block the sale.

Mr. Hill, briefing reporters traveling with Miss Rice yesterday, said the new proposal would involve monitoring the implementation of the entire Oct. 3 agreement, not just North Korea's obligations.

It would include seeking accountability for the heavy fuel oil the United States must deliver to the North at various stages of the process that would dismantle Pyongyang's nuclear programs in exchange for political and economic incentives, Mr. Hill said.

In October, North Korea also "agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs" by Dec. 31, but it missed the deadline.

Although it has almost completed the required disablement of its Yongbyon reactor, the declaration remains a major problem.

Ms. Rice will seek to break the impasse when she visits Beijing today by enlisting Chinese help in persuading the North to explain the Syrian issue, a uranium-enrichment program that U.S. intelligence says it discovered in 2002 and other past activities.

Washington has rejected pressure from some of its partners in the six-party talks to compromise on the overdue declaration.

Mr. Hill said earlier this month that those countries had told him, "Well, two out of three is not bad," and "Why do you worry so much about the past?"

China, eager for progress in the negotiations, is said to be one of those countries. It is also expected to be cool to the new U.S. anti-proliferation proposal.

Japan appears to be on the same page with the United States, as does South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, who took office yesterday.

"We understand that the proliferation element is an important part of a complete and accurate declaration. In our view, it is already included in what we expect on the part of [North Korea] as part of the six-party framework," said Hiroshi Suzuki, a Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080226/FOREIGN/66552437/1001>

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Yahoo.com

February 27, 2008

Gates Warns India 'Clock Is Ticking' On Nuclear Accord

By Jim Mannion, Agence France-Presse

NEW DELHI -- US Defence Secretary Robert Gates warned Wednesday that "the clock is ticking" on a US-Indian civilian nuclear accord that has been stalled by the New Delhi's government's communist allies.

Wrapping up a two-day visit that focused on US arms sales and a burgeoning military relationship, Gates said however failure to reach agreement on the civilian nuclear technology in time would have little impact on the deepening military ties.

"The clock is ticking in terms of how much time is available to get all the different aspects of an agreement implemented," Gates told reporters.

Senator Joseph Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, has warned the Indians that a civil nuclear agreement had to come before the Senate for approval no later than July.

The White House said Tuesday there was a "bit more time" in the US political calendar before President George W. Bush leaves office, but Gates warned that it depends on when the Senate recesses for the US elections.

He said the United States would respect India's internal politics but was hopeful that the government would solve the impasse in time.

"The two sides need to work together on that," he said, adding that "it serves the best interests of both countries, and I think it is an agreement that has positive global consequences."

Whatever the outcome, Gates said US military relations with India were broad and would continue to move in a positive direction.

US arms contractors are keen to compete for Indian weapons contracts, particularly a competition for 126 multi-role fighter aircraft worth 10 to 12 billion dollars.

Gates said that in his meetings with Indian leaders he expressed appreciation for India's decision last month to buy six US-made C-130J aircraft, a deal worth more than a billion dollars to aeronautics giant Lockheed-Martin.

"There are some other deals in the works," the defence chief said. "I indicated that we are interested, and obviously believe we are very competitive, in the selection of the new multi-role combat fighter.

"We ask no special treatment, we simply are pleased to have a place at the table, and we believe that in a fair competition we have a very good case to make.

"The C-130 sale will give us an opportunity to demonstrate not only the quality of our equipment, but also the quality of the service and maintenance and follow on in these sales."

India traditionally has looked to Russia as a supplier of military equipment, but has begun to diversify as it undertakes a major across-the-board modernisation of its armed forces.

A US defence official travelling with Gates said the Indians were intent on acquiring a world class air force and blue water navy capable of projecting power beyond the subcontinent.

Although Pakistan has been India's traditional adversary, New Delhi's drive to modernise its military has been spurred by a parallel military transformation in China, its nearest potential rival for regional influence and power.

During previous stops in Indonesia and Australia, Gates emphasised US interest in helping those democracies to strengthen their military capabilities and assume a larger security role in the region.

He insisted the US push to improve military ties in the region should not be viewed "in the context of any other country, including China."

"These expanding relationships do not necessarily have to be directed against anybody," he said.

Gates said the United States was taking a long-term view in its developing security relationship with India.

"We're not looking for quick results, or great leaps forward, but a steady expansion of this relationship," he said.

He added that the US relationship with India had strong bi-partisan support in Washington, and would continue regardless of who was elected US president in November.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080227/pl_afp/indiausmilitarynuclearpolitics_080227134553

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Times of India

February 28, 2008

Pg. 12

Clock Is Ticking On N-Deal, US tells India

Says US won't put conditions for selling jets

By Indrani Bagchi, Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Keeping up the intensity of the message from Washington on the nuclear deal, US defence secretary Robert Gates said on Wednesday that "the clock is ticking".

Describing the deal as one with "positive global consequences", Gates said, "The real key here is providing time for our Senate to ratify the final arrangements... The clock is ticking in terms of how much time is available to get all the different aspects of this agreement implemented."

On the defence side, Gates laid on a charm offensive as the US takes the first steady steps on ramping up military cooperation with India.

During his talks with the Indian government on the 126 multi-role combat aircraft bid, he said, "I indicated that we are interested and believe that we are competitive in the selection of the new fighter."

Gates added, "We ask no special treatment. We simply are pleased to have a place at the table and we believe that in a fair competition we have a very good case to make."

The Indian government on Wednesday extended the last date for bids by eight weeks. In fact, Gates sent out some interesting messages to India.

First, that future political problems with India would not affect US defence supplies, a key worry for India's defence leadership.

Asked whether India's sale of weapons to Myanmar would affect US sales to India, Gates categorically replied, "We

won't impose pre-conditions."

This is key to establishing "reliable supplier" status, said sources.

Second, there is life beyond the nuclear agreement. Gates stressed that the India relationship was "wide-ranging". Addressing concerns that the two countries were getting together too quickly for comfort, Gates said, "We're not looking for quick results or big leaps forward. But rather a steady expansion of this relationship in a way that leaves everybody comfortable that we're not moving too fast and that works in terms of Indian domestic politics and also works for us."

Third, Gates was probably the only US cabinet member to say openly that US had little issues with India's professed "non-alignment". "We're mindful of India's non-alignment," he said.

On nuke deal, Gates said he was "respectful of the domestic political issues in India", adding, "Let the government be the judge of how to move this agreement forward."

<http://www.timesofindia.com/articleshow/2820041.cms>

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Washington Times

February 28, 2008

Pg. 11

U.S. Suggests Secret Disclosure Of Nuclear Past

By Nicholas Kravev, The Washington Times

BEIJING — The United States is urging North Korea to end a deadlock in six-nation nuclear talks by completing an overdue account of its nuclear past with a document that might remain secret.

In November, Pyongyang disclosed details of its efforts to make atomic bombs from plutonium. But the United States says it failed to explain a parallel program to make highly enriched uranium, an equally potent fuel for nuclear weapons.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice publicly raised the prospect of an additional disclosure yesterday in Tokyo, her last stop on a three-nation visit to East Asia.

"I really have less concern about what form it takes or how many different pieces of paper there may have to be or how many times it may have to go back and forth," Miss Rice said.

U.S. officials said privately last month that North Korea could submit a second list to account for uranium-enrichment efforts, which are thought to have led to transfers of equipment and technology to Syria.

At a private dinner in Washington late last month, Alexander Vershbow, the U.S. ambassador to South Korea, said the Bush administration is looking for a way to persuade North Koreans to cooperate without "rubbing it on their noses."

A separate document would give the United States the information it demands about dangerous North Korean activities and save Pyongyang public embarrassment by keeping part of the list secret, diplomats said.

The declaration, which was due at the end of December, would complete the second phase of an October deal aimed at denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and would clear the way for promised political and economic benefits to the communist state.

A Syrian facility targeted by an Israeli air strike in September has become a major issue for the United States because it was widely reported to be a nuclear site under construction with help from North Korea.

The matter was expected to be raised during a meeting between Miss Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert today in Tokyo.

Mr. Olmert was in Tokyo to explain intelligence on North Korean nuclear cooperation with Syria.

The Bush administration first accused North Korea of running a secret uranium-enrichment program in 2002.

Chinese negotiators have urged the United States to accept North Korea's November declaration and leave uranium enrichment and transfers to Syria for future negotiations.

Christopher R. Hill, the chief U. S. negotiator with North Korea, remained in Beijing to continue talks with the Chinese yesterday while Miss Rice flew to Tokyo from Beijing. She visited Seoul on Monday.

South Korea, China and Japan, along with the U.S., Russia and North Korea, are in talks to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

North Korean cooperation would bring energy aid and other assistance from the United States and South Korea, including a supply of 1 million tons of fuel oil for conventional power plants.

"The third phase is going to be really hard, which is where you have to really talk about dismantling [the North's programs] and you have to account for the material and you have to figure out what to do with the material," Miss Rice said.

Diplomats and analysts said Washington must find a way to break the impasse while holding to its demands that North Korea explain any secret programs and proliferation activities.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080228/FOREIGN/862488585/1003>

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New York Times
February 28, 2008

Bush And Czech Leader Close To Deal On Radar

By Sheryl Gay Stolberg

WASHINGTON — President Bush and the Czech leader said Wednesday that they were close to an agreement on a plan for the United States to install an early warning radar system in the Czech Republic, a key component of a missile defense system that has drawn stiff opposition from Russia.

“There are only three words remaining to resolve,” said the Czech prime minister, Mirek Topolánek, speaking through an interpreter, after meeting with Mr. Bush in the Oval Office. He described the sticking points as “minor details” and said they had to do with environmental protection issues.

Asked how close the two were to reaching agreement, Mr. Bush said, “Close.” He added, “There’s a will to get this done, for the sake of mutual security.”

Under the plan, which would be subject to the approval of the Czech Parliament, the United States would install a radar system in the Czech Republic.

The plan includes 10 missile interceptors in silos in Poland. Negotiations with Poland are continuing, and the issue is likely to come up in April, when Mr. Bush attends a meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in Bucharest, Romania.

The Bush administration says that the defense system will be capable of shooting down missiles aimed at the United States or its NATO allies, and that it is necessary to fend off threats from nations like Iran and North Korea.

But Russia, which regards the system as a threat to its security, has objected strenuously — so much so that President Vladimir V. Putin has threatened to point missiles at Eastern Europe.

At a meeting of heads of state of the leading industrialized nations over the summer, Mr. Putin surprised Mr. Bush with a plan of his own: to have the United States use one of the early warning radar systems that the Kremlin leases from Azerbaijan. Mr. Bush agreed to engage in what he called “serious discussions,” though he has repeatedly insisted that he will not abandon his own plan.

On Wednesday, he once again defended the American plan and insisted that it was not intended to undermine Russian security.

“Russia’s not a threat to peace,” Mr. Bush said. “Regimes that adhere to extremist ideologies which may have the capability of launching weapons to those of us who love freedom, they’re the threats to peace. The missile defense system is aimed to deal with those threats.”

Experts in missile defense, however, say that those reassurances are not enough to ease Moscow’s concerns and that any final agreement could be delayed while the Bush administration discusses the plan with Russian officials.

“At this point, I think they haven’t gotten the reassurances they are looking to get,” said Guy Ben-Ari, an expert in missile defense at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “Assuming everything goes very quickly, and the Czechs give the green light, I think there will still not be a formal announcement made, because the Russians need some more placating.”

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/28/washington/28prexy.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin

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GovExec.com

Air Force taking new step to avoid repeat of August nuclear handling mistake

By Robert Burns, Associated Press
February 28, 2008

WASHINGTON (AP) -- In response to flaws exposed by an embarrassing nuclear weapons error last August, the Air Force will change the way bomber crews organize for their nuclear training mission, the top Air Force general said Thursday.

Gen. Michael Moseley, the Air Force chief of staff, told reporters that B-52 crews assigned to training for the nuclear attack mission will do that exclusively for at least six months at a time, rather than switching regularly between training for nuclear and non-nuclear missions.

He said the exclusively nuclear training might be as long as 12 months, but that detail has not yet been decided. The idea is to improve B-52 crews' focus on the stringent safeguards built into the nuclear mission, thereby avoiding a repeat of the startling missteps of last August when a B-52 was mistakenly armed with six nuclear-tipped cruise missiles and flown from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., to Barksdale Air Force Base, La. At the time, the pilot and crew were unaware they had nuclear arms aboard.

The error was considered so grave that President Bush was quickly informed.

Moseley said the change in organizing B-52 squadrons for their nuclear training mission will happen shortly but he gave no specific time. He noted that B-52s fly frequent conventional bombing missions over Afghanistan and thus have too many demands on their training in addition to the nuclear role.

"We need to somehow allow the squadron commander to focus on that (nuclear mission) and that alone" instead of assuming these units can switch back and forth regularly without a loss of focus, Moseley said.

The Air Force has already taken dozens of other steps to improve the nuclear training operations. Moseley said those were in response to recommendations by two panels that closely examined the August incident, which top Air Force leaders said afterward was an "unacceptable mistake."

When the results of the Air Force's own investigation were announced last October, Maj. Gen. Richard Newton, the Air Force deputy chief of staff for operations, attributed the episode to an "unprecedented string of procedural errors" beginning with a failure by airmen to conduct a required inspection of the missiles before they were loaded aboard the B-52 bomber that flew from Minot.

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USA Today

Ports report urges better evaluation of nuke detectors

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government needs to develop a better way to evaluate the effectiveness of technology to detect nuclear and radiological material at U.S. ports, according to a report commissioned by the Homeland Security Department.

Congress and its investigative arm, the Government Accountability Office, have been skeptical about the department's testing of such systems. As a result, the department called for an independent audit into its testing.

The report by the Homeland Security Institute did not find that the testing has been biased or results manipulated. It did say the department should devise a better process to test and evaluate how effective the machines are.

The Associated Press obtained the executive summary of the recently completed report.

The machines are intended to address concerns that a nuclear bomb, hidden in a cargo container, could detonate in an American port.

The department plans to spend about \$350 million to develop and deploy next generation radiation monitors that will screen cargo, cars and trucks that come through ports, according to a homeland security official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. The most the department can spend on this program is \$1.2 billion, but current tests show that these systems can be deployed for far less, the official said.

The goal is to purchase about 800 of these next generation monitors called, Advanced Spectroscopic Portals, over the course of the next five years. The monitors are expected to cost about \$360,000.

The portal monitors now in use cost about \$82,000 and can detect the presence of radiation. They cannot distinguish between harmless or dangerous material. Radioactive material can be found naturally in ceramics and kitty litter, for instance.

Lawmakers have questioned whether the new technology offers much improvement over current monitors. But the department's testing has found that the next generation monitors, produce much less false positives.

The Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach gets 400 to 500 nuclear alarms a day, the official said. The new monitors should reduce that to 40 to 50. About 200 Customs officers are assigned at this port to deal with the alarms. The improved detection systems will relieve the burden on the Customs officers, the official said.

The 800 monitors will not replace all the existing systems. In some ports, the first generation models will remain in place.

The report will be made available to some lawmakers but will not be released publicly. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff is expected to decide whether the next generation equipment significantly improves the

nuclear and radiological detection capabilities this fall. He had delayed this decision until after the independent review was completed.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2008-02-27-nuclear-detectors_N.htm

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