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Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with nuclear, biological and chemical threats and attacks. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

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Washington Times

February 29, 2008

Pg. 6

Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz

Fight over China

Bush administration officials say a new political battle is brewing between U.S. intelligence analysts and policy-makers over the threat posed by China's military buildup.

The dispute involves differences between the Pentagon's tougher view, outlined in the forthcoming China military power report, and the softer views held by key intelligence community analysts.

Senior analysts in the office of the director of national intelligence (ODNI) are said by defense officials to be deliberately underestimating the nature and scope of China's conventional and nuclear forces buildup, and whether it is focused solely on a possible future conflict over Taiwan, or is much bigger and more ominous in posing a greater threat to the U.S. and its allies in Asia.

The Pentagon view, which is backed by the State Department, is that the buildup of mobile missiles, submarines, warships, bombers, space and cyber weapons is part of a Beijing program of preparing for war with Taiwan and an anticipated U.S. defense of the island, but also possible conflicts with India, Japan, Vietnam and others in the region. The political fight is said to be similar to the battle triggered by a politically-charged National Intelligence Estimate made public in December asserting that Iran halted work on nuclear weapons years ago, even though Tehran is illegally enriching uranium, a key component for bombs.

Pentagon officials said hints of the dispute surfaced Wednesday during Senate Armed Services Committee testimony by Michael McConnell, the director of national intelligence (DNI). Mr. McConnell's written statement on China's arms modernization dismisses concerns that the buildup is a threat.

"We judge that any Chinese regime, even a democratic one, would have similar goals," he stated, suggesting China is a normal state and not a nuclear-armed communist dictatorship.

As with the Iran estimate, the key figure is Thomas Fingar, a career State Department analyst who is now deputy DNI for analysis. Two other analysts under Mr. Fingar identified as part of the faction on China are National Intelligence Officer for East Asia Paul Heer, and his deputy Lonnie Henley. The fourth is DNI military analyst and retired Army Maj. Gen. John Landry, who helped write the bogus 2002 Iraq weapons estimate and who, surprisingly, is still employed at the National Intelligence Council.

Of the four, Mr. Henley's pro-China bias is the most egregious. In 2006, he indirectly supported the unauthorized disclosure of intelligence to China by writing a letter of support to the judge on behalf of convicted former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst Ron Montaperto, who pleaded guilty to espionage-related charges after admitting he passed secrets to Chinese military intelligence agents.

DNI spokesman Ross Feinstein denied there is a dispute over China and said the assertion "appear to be merely an attempt by you or others to incite angst or provoke a fight that does not actually exist."

The four officials tried and failed to block elements of the tougher assessment of China's military capabilities to be released next month by the Pentagon that will contain new information on China's military, including its growing power projection arms. The report, required by Congress, will be the first made public close to the time it is required, and its content has surprised some officials by getting the stamp of approval from State Department policy-makers.

Perry in Pyongyang

Former Defense Secretary William Perry, who once prepared to go to war with North Korea to block the communist regime of Kim Jong-il from getting nuclear weapons, made a visit to Pyongyang this week.

Mr. Perry, defense secretary from 1994 to 1997, traveled to Pyongyang to take part in the New York Philharmonic concert held in the capital as part of an effort to develop cultural ties to the Stalinist Kim regime.

Mr. Perry said during a recent meeting at his Stanford University office that he expects North Korea to reach an agreement with the U.S. and four other nations to fully disclose its nuclear program, probably before the end of the year.

The six-party talks are stalled over North Korea's failure to provide a full accounting of its past uranium enrichment activities.

Bill Gertz covers national security affairs.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20080229/NATION04/643772400>

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Los Angeles Times

February 29, 2008

U.S. Warns Europe Of Iran Missiles

Tehran is close to building arms capable of reaching major capitals, says an official promoting a defense system.

By Kim Murphy, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

LONDON — With American officials working to close a deal on a missile defense system in Europe, the head of the U.S. program warned Thursday that Iran was within two or three years of producing a missile that could reach most European capitals.

"They're already flying missiles that exceed what they would need in a fight with Israel. Why? Why do they continue this progression in terms of range of missiles? It's something we need to think about," Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering III, director of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, told a conference here on missile defense. The message was aimed at staving off skepticism in Europe and clinching a deal for radar and interceptor sites in the Czech Republic and Poland. It underscored increasing concern among defense experts that while attention has focused on nuclear proliferation, nations such as China, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan and India have made significant strides in developing missiles that can reach far beyond their immediate neighbors.

"Our short-range defenses could protect Rome and Athens," Obering said, but he warned that London, Paris and Brussels would remain vulnerable "against an Iranian [intermediate-range missile] threat."

Many in Europe have expressed doubts that Iran would target European cities. But Obering said it was possible to imagine as little as seven years from now a nuclear-armed Iran shutting off oil shipments in the Persian Gulf, or Al Qaeda militants seizing freighters off Europe and arming them with nuclear-tipped Scud missiles "to punish the West for invasion of Muslim holy lands."

The timing of the warning was hardly coincidental, as Bush administration officials this week were attempting through talks in Washington to clear the last hurdles for agreements with Poland and the Czech Republic on the U.S.-run system of interceptor missiles and radar in Europe.

The Czech Foreign Ministry official in charge of security policy, Veronika Kuchynova Smigolova, predicted that the deal could be signed as early as next month's NATO summit in Bucharest, the Romanian capital, and ratified by the Czech Parliament by summer.

But Russia remains vigorously opposed to what it sees as a permanent new U.S. military infrastructure near its borders in Central Europe, and there are concerns on the continent about further alienating Iran and Russia. Some critics have questioned the wisdom of allowing the U.S., rather than the European Union or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, to take the lead in defending Europe against such missiles.

Malcolm Chalmers, a onetime foreign policy advisor to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, said the decision to locate the system in former Warsaw Pact nations may have sparked opposition in Moscow that otherwise "would be much less vociferous."

"Did we only deploy it there because that's the only place available?" said Chalmers, who is now a fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, which sponsored Thursday's conference.

Some Europeans have questioned whether Iran represents a genuine threat to Europe, and have accused the Bush administration of undermining existing arms control agreements by proceeding unilaterally on missile defense.

"This is firstly and foremostly an American choice and should be taken as such," said Yves Boyer, deputy director of the Foundation for Strategic Research in Paris. "It has not been requested by any European state and . . . it does not answer the critical need for Europeans to process their own assessment of strategic capabilities."

Jane Sharp, senior research fellow in defense studies at King's College London, said the Bush administration had cost the West a once-cooperative relationship with Russia.

"Even if ballistic missile defense did look credible to a potential adversary, they're still destabilizing, because the logical response for any adversary for a credible defense is to acquire more offensive capability -- this is what the Russians are telling us every day," she said.

But reflecting the wariness of Russia long present among the European Union's newest members -- Poland has made it clear that it fears attack from Russia much more than from Iran -- Smigolova said the proposed defense program would restore equality of security on both sides of the Atlantic.

"Russia knows very well that one radar and 10 interceptors won't change the strategic balance and doesn't present any real military problem for them," she said. "But for them, a U.S. presence in Central Europe is the final confirmation of the loss of their influence over this part of Europe."

Smigolova said the Czech government was "well aware" of widespread public opposition to the system in that country and in Europe, but would be pushing to ratify the agreement after remaining concerns over environmental protections were worked out.

Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolánek met Wednesday at the White House with President Bush but withheld his approval for the system, citing remaining differences on environmental standards for the radar equipment. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk is scheduled to visit Bush on March 10.

U.S. negotiators are due in Poland today to discuss modernizing that country's military, a key Polish request in the missile defense talks.

Bush said in a news conference Thursday that he still hoped to persuade the Russian government to drop its opposition. "I believe it's in our interests to try to figure out a way for the Russians to understand the system is not aimed at them, but aimed at the real threats of the 21st century," Bush said.

U.S. officials and many European security experts have said the rate at which new nations are obtaining the capability to build longer-range missiles, with increasingly sophisticated maneuvering ability, is greatly expanding.

Times staff writers Paul Richter in Washington and Janet Stobart in London contributed to this report.
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missiles29feb29,1,1071895.story>

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Christian Science Monitor

Oil for nukes – mostly a bad idea

Bartering nuclear technology for oil is a path to the spread of nuclear weapons.

By Matthew Fuhrmann

Cambridge, Mass.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy is on a nuclear power selling spree in the Middle East.

He has recently pledged to assist the civilian nuclear programs of three oil-producing countries in this conflict-prone region: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. These pledges were preceded by signed offers of nuclear aid to Algeria and Libya, two other oil exporters.

If history is any guide, two things seem probable. First, these nuclear power sales are an attempt to ensure a stable oil supply at a time when prices are approaching record highs. And second, this oil for nuclear technology swap is a deal that France will later regret.

As part of my research at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, I recently analyzed more than 2,000 nuclear agreements – like the ones France just signed – that countries have concluded since 1950. The findings confirmed that the common practice of trading nuclear technology for steady oil is a bad idea. The short-term gains for the nuclear supplier almost always result in adverse long-term repercussions – like the spread of nuclear weapons.

For example, in 1975, France signed an agreement with Iraq authorizing the export of a research reactor and highly enriched uranium. According to French officials at the time, their aim was to obtain a permanent and secure oil supply from a country that provided 20 percent of its oil.

It worked. But it also had tremendous consequences for international and regional security.

According to intelligence estimates, French assistance could have enabled Iraq to build nuclear weapons in a matter of years. Recognizing the severity of this threat, especially after Saddam Hussein became president, Israel used preemptive strikes to destroy the French-supplied reactor in 1981. Perhaps realizing its mistake, France terminated its nuclear relationship with Iraq shortly after.

History is rife with similar stories. The United States assisted Iran's civilian nuclear program between 1957 and 1979. This assistance included the construction of the Tehran Research Reactor and the supply of enriched uranium to fuel it. The US believed that the cooperation would persuade Iran to lower the price of oil, particularly in the 1970s when prices spiked following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war."

Of course, Washington regretted offering these exports after Iran switched from friend to foe following the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But it could not take back what it had already provided.

Today, the reactor in Tehran is used to provide advanced training to Iranian scientists – auspiciously aiding Iran's current nuclear program. This program continues to undermine stability in the Middle East and could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region.

Selling nuclear power technology for oil only comes back to take a bite out of world security. Nuclear exporters in general must be more cautious in choosing their trading partners. The link between the peaceful and military uses of the nuclear technology is stronger than many people realize. A statistical analysis of this relationship shows that countries receiving technology for "peaceful" purposes also eventually want nuclear weapons. Because distinguishing between "peaceful" and sinister uses of the atom is next to impossible, and civilian nuclear agreements ultimately enable proliferation, countries must resist the temptation to seek cheap oil to ease economic woes.

Suppliers should learn from the experience of the former Soviet Union. After inadvertently aiding the Chinese nuclear weapons program in the 1950s, Moscow rarely bartered nuclear technology for short-term political or economic gains and kept the most sensitive technologies away from even its closest allies. The success of the Soviet experience suggests that – with due diligence – the current trend can be reversed.

We are in the midst of a major nuclear renaissance. Countries in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, and southeast Asia have all expressed a desire to begin or revive civilian nuclear programs. Bartering nuclear technology for oil is sure to lead to the further spread of nuclear weapons.

Instead of taking dangerous shortcuts to economic enhancement, countries such as France must look to more fulfilling solutions.

An oil-thirsty world is preferable to one full of nuclear bombs.

• *Matthew Fuhrmann is a research fellow at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. He is currently writing a book on why countries cooperate in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.*

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0229/p09s02-coop.html>

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Las Vegas Sun

Biological toxin found in Las Vegas motel

By *Abigail Goldman* · February 28, 2008 · 10:35 PM

Ricin, a deadly toxin, was discovered in a room at a weekly motel off Valley View Boulevard and Flamingo Road this afternoon.

The substance was brought to the attention of employees at Extended StayAmerica, 4270 S. Valley View Blvd., at approximately 2:30 p.m. by an unidentified man who gained access to one of the motel rooms, though he was not staying at the property, police said.

Hotel employees thought the substance looked suspicious and called police, who responded with the Clark County Fire Department.

Presumptive testing quickly revealed the substance was ricin and police shut down the property.

An ambulance driver wearing a protective mask took three motel employees, as well as the individual who found the ricin, to the hospital.

Crews from Metro Homeland Security detail, the Southern Nevada health district, and the FBI were called to the scene.

Ricin is derived from castor beans and can be deadly in small quantities, said Metro Sergeant Joseph Lombardo, head of the department's Homeland security unit. It is used in cancer research, but is illegal to produce for any other reason.

Ricin can be delivered in a mist, a pellet or can be dissolved in water or weak acid, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. The toxin gets inside cells of a human body and prevents the cells from making vital protein. As little as 500 micrograms — an amount that fits on the head of a pin — can kill an adult. It is not known how much was found in the hotel room.

Officers found the substance in a small vile along with actual castor beans, Lombardo said.

By 8 p.m. the scene was swarmed with TV news crews. Beyond the area blocked off by media, people in hazmat suits could be seen walking to and from the building. A white tent — a decontamination shower — was also set up outside.

Guests of the property, who were out when the incident occurred, found themselves shut out of their rooms, while guests inside were asked to stay in their rooms.

By 10:30 p.m. the clean up was still going on, but the ousted guests had a place to go — another motel down the street, this one billed “Deluxe.”

This is not the first time ricin has caught the attention of law enforcement and health officials. In March 2003 a suicidal man told police he had injected himself with the toxin. Metro Police, the FBI, the Southern Nevada Health District and Clark County Fire Department authorities responded to a residence in the southwestern valley. The man died at a local hospital, but no neighbors were endangered.

— *Sun reporter Mary Manning and photographer Steve Marcus contributed to this report.*

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/blogs/news/2008/feb/28/biological-toxin-found-las-vegas-hotel/>

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James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies

<http://cns.miis.edu>

Combating the spread of weapons of mass destruction

Owing to the developing news today (February 29, 2008) out of Las Vegas, Nevada, regarding ricin, the CBR Weapons and WMD Terrorism News presents here a special compilation of topical information on the toxin.

RICIN: THE TOXIN

Ricin, a toxin created from the waste of processed castor beans, can be weaponized as a powder, mist, or pellet. The toxin can also be dissolved in weak acid or water. Only 500 micrograms may be needed to kill an adult. Methods of exposure include ingestion, inhalation, or injection. Ricin works by counteracting the protein-making function of cells in the body, causing the cells to die, and potentially resulting in death of the organism. Symptoms after

inhalation appear within 8 hours of exposure, and those for ingestion appear in less than 6 hours. Symptoms of ingestion include vomiting and diarrhea, and possibly hallucinations and seizures. Those of inhalation include difficulty breathing, fever, cough, and nausea. This, and further information, is available at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/facts.asp>.

PREVIOUS INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE USE/POSSESSION OF RICIN

On May 24, 2007, a British lab confirmed that traces of ricin had been found in an Irish prison cell. The ricin was smuggled into Ireland from the US in a contact lens case, to be used in an assassination plot. The man was arrested before the ricin could be used. The amount of ricin in the contact lens case was very small, and according to authorities did not pose a significant hazard.

On October 3, 2006, Denys Ray Hughes of Phoenix, Arizona, was sentenced to seven years in prison for the attempted manufacture of ricin. According to authorities, Hughes was a survivalist with no known ties to any terrorist organizations or extremist groups.

On January 14, 2005, Steven Michael Ekberg, of Ocala, Florida, was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for possession of a biological weapon after agents found ricin in the home he shares with his mother. Ekberg had castor beans and other products in his possession. Ekberg later pleaded guilty in federal court to possession of a biological weapon.

On February 3, 2004, ricin was found on an automatic mail sorter in the mailroom of the Dirksen Senate Office building in Washington, D.C. A specialized Marine unit trained to handle chemical and biological incidents responded to the event, and 16 employees went through decontamination procedures. The mailroom handled mail addressed to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. According to Frist, no one became sick.

In October 2003, a metallic container was discovered at a Greenville, South Carolina, postal facility with ricin in it. The small container was in an envelope along with a threatening note. Authorities did not believe this was a terrorism related incident. The note expressed anger against regulations overseeing the trucking industry.

On March 3, 2003, FBI agents arrested Bertier Ray Riddle in Omaha, Arkansas, on suspicion that he sent an envelope to the FBI field office in Little Rock that claimed to contain ricin. The front of the envelope sent on 19 February, reportedly stated that the letter was from a "Lee Alexander Hughes." The return address on the letter was Riddle's, but was signed "Sincerely not Bertie Ray Riddle." The front of the envelope also contained the phrase "If you make me have to claim to be my kidnapper's son, while depriving me of my correct identity you are going to hell!" The back of the envelope reportedly stated "Caution: contents contain ricin." A plastic bag containing a powder and dark flakes was discovered inside of the envelope. Test on the substance revealed that it was not ricin. On March 12, 2003, Riddle was indicted on two charges, one of mailing a threatening communication and the other of insulting a federal law enforcement officer and threatening to use a weapon of mass destruction.

On January 5, 2003, six Algerians were arrested at their apartment in London, United Kingdom on charges of "being in the possession of objects which give rise to reasonable suspicions of the intention of carrying out preparing, or instigating an act of terrorism" and for trying to "develop or produce a chemical weapon." Following the arrests, authorities discovered traces of ricin in the apartment located in Wood Green, located in northern London. They also discovered castor oil beans and equipment for crushing the beans. Those arrested are believed to be part of a terrorist cell known as the "Chechen network" which may have ties to the Algerian group behind the millennium bomb plots in the United States. Members of the cell are Algerians who received training in Chechnya and the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Five of the six arrested were identified as Mustapha Taleb, Mouloud Feddag, Sidali Feddag, Samir Feddag, and Nasreddine Fekhadji. Authorities arrested the suspects following a tip by French intelligence agencies, which had been following two of the men. Authorities stated that they believe the ricin discovered was only part of a larger batch that they believe was removed from the apartment before the arrests. Police stated that they were continuing to search for the missing ricin.

In August 2002, reports emerged that Ansar al-Islam, a Sunni militant group, has been involved in testing poisons and chemicals including ricin. According to one report the group tested ricin powder as an aerosol on animals such as donkeys and chickens and perhaps even an unwitting human subject. No more specific details have been released.

On June 19, 2002, Kenneth R. Olsen, 48, was arrested for possession of the biological agent ricin in his Spokane Valley office cubicle. Co-workers at Agilent, a high-tech company, tipped FBI officials about the software engineer after discovering documents on "how to kill," undetectable poisons, and bomb-making Olsen had printed out from

his computer. Olsen insisted that his research was for a Boy Scout project, but did not say more. Further investigation of his office produced test tubes, castor beans, glass jars, and approximately 1 gram of ricin.

In August 2001, the FSB (Russian Federal Security Service) told the Itar-Tass news service it had intercepted a recorded conversation between two Chechen field commanders in which they discussed using homemade poisons against Russian troops.

According to Itar-Tass, Chechen Brigadier General Rizvan Chitigov asked Chechen field commander Hizir Alhazurov, who is now living in the United Arab Emirates, for instructions on the "homemade production of poison" for use against Russian soldiers. Russian authorities reportedly raided Chitigov's home and seized materials, including instructions on how to use toxic agents to contaminate consumer goods, a small chemical laboratory, three homemade explosives, two land mines, and 30 grenades. The confiscated papers reportedly also contained instructions on how to produce ricin from castor beans.

In November 1999, press reports indicated that FBI agents had apprehended a man in Tampa, Florida, for threatening to kill court officials and "wage biological warfare" in Jefferson County, Colorado. James Kenneth Gluck, 53, a former Colorado resident, sent a 10-page letter to Jefferson County judges threatening to kill them with a biological agent. He specifically identified one judge by name. FBI agents arrested Gluck on 5 November 1999 as he left a public library near his home in Tampa. Police, fire, and hazardous materials (HazMat) crews responded to the scene along with the FBI and blocked off Gluck's street. Upon searching his residence the next day, agents discovered that Gluck had the necessary ingredients to make ricin, though no refined ricin was actually found. They also found test tubes and beakers, as well as the "anarchist's cookbook" and books on biological toxicology, in a makeshift laboratory in his home.

On August 25, 1998, Dwayne Lee Kuehl, 38, was arrested in Escanaba, Michigan, for producing ricin with intent to use it against an Escanaba city official. Kuehl was under investigation in connection with a 1 February 1988 fire that destroyed a business that he owned. While carrying out a search warrant at Kuehl's home and his rental property, police interviewed him. During the interview, Kuehl indicated that he had obtained the recipe and ingredients for the manufacture of ricin and made the poison in 1993. He also admitted that he made the ricin in order to kill James O'Toole, an Escanaba housing inspector. Police later found the ingredients for ricin manufacture, along with other toxic substances, at two separate residences owned by Kuehl.

In March 1998, three members of a splinter group of the North American Militia in Michigan were arrested on weapons and conspiracy charges. The April 1998 indictment was the result of an investigation involving an Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) agent who infiltrated the group in March 1997. When federal law enforcement raided the homes of these men, they discovered an arsenal of weapons and a videotape. Produced in a cooking-show format, the tape gave instructions on how to manufacture bombs and other assorted militia-type weaponry, including a feature segment on how to extract ricin from castor beans. During the court proceedings, prosecutors drew attention to the ricin segment, stating that the men were "collecting information on the manufacture and use of ricin." However, other than the videotape, no materials associated with ricin production were found in any of the raids.

On April 1, 1997, Internal Revenue Service (IRS) investigators searched the home of James Dalton Bell, a 39-year-old electronics engineer, and discovered a cache of chemicals, which included sodium cyanide (500 grams), diisopropyl flourophosphate,

and a range of corrosive acids. Subsequent analysis of computer files confiscated from the residence revealed that Bell engaged in e-mail communications with a friend, Robert East, a 46-year-old merchant marine radio operator, that expressed a desire to obtain castor beans to see if they could extract ricin. Bell had already acquired the home addresses of nearly 100 federal employees from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), IRS, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; and computer files from voter registration. Bell was in the process of producing and acquiring chemical and biological agents.

On January 17, 1997, authorities discovered various toxic substances in the house of Thomas Leahy in Janesville, Wisconsin. They discovered the substances after they had been called to Leahy's home after he had shot his son in the face, following a night of drinking. Among the chemicals discovered were 0.67 grams of ricin and nicotine mixed with a solvent that allowed it to penetrate the skin and have lethal effects. Authorities also found books relating to the production of chemical and biological agents. Chemicals were also found in a storage shed that Leahy kept in Harvard, Illinois. He reportedly told his sister that he was going to use the poison to coat razor blades and mail them to his enemies in hopes that they would cut themselves and become infected. Leahy pleaded guilty to

possession of the ricin and was sentenced to eight years for the shooting and six-and-one-half years for possessing dangerous materials.

On December 20, 1995, Thomas Lewis Lavy was arrested in Onia, Arkansas, for possession of ricin. In April 1993, Lavy was caught while trying to smuggle 130 grams of ricin from Alaska into Canada. Lavy stated that he purchased the ricin to poison coyotes on his farm in Arkansas and keep them away from his chickens. Lavy was stopped at the Beaver Creek border crossing by Canadian custom agents who found, along with the 130 grams of ricin, \$89,000, a knife, four guns, and 20,000 rounds of ammunition. Lavy was charged with possession of a toxic substance with intent to use it as a weapon. At the time of Lavy's arrest, FBI agents found castor beans and copies of one book describing how to extract ricin from castor beans, and another discussing ways to poison people with toxic compounds. Lavy was ordered to be held until a January court date in Alaska, but committed suicide in his prison cell before the trial.

On August 22, 1995, Dr. Ray W. Mettetal, Jr., a 44-year-old neurologist at Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg, Virginia, was apprehended at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, carrying a six-inch veterinarian's syringe with a four-inch needle filled with boric acid and salt water (contact lens solution), which could prove lethal if injected into the heart. He allegedly planned to use the syringe to murder Dr. George S. Allen, his former supervisor when he was a neurology resident at Vanderbilt in the 1980s. After the arrest, police searched a storage unit rented by Mettetal in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in which they found toxic chemicals and several books on assassination and producing chemical and biological agents. Also among the items was a small glass jar containing the toxin ricin, notes documenting Allen's whereabouts, maps of the campus where Allen worked, and photographs of his house. These notebooks alleged that Mettetal planned to soak pages of a book with a ricin-solvent mixture that could promote the movement of the toxin through the skin once introduced. After the ricin was discovered in his possession, a federal case was brought against Mettetal. He was also charged with the federal offense of providing false information (e.g., the false identity of Steven Ray Maupin) to the U.S. Postal Service.

On August 7, 1995, Michael Farrar, a 40-year-old cardiologist, was hospitalized with a mysterious illness. On two additional occasions, Farrar was hospitalized for exhibiting similar unexplained symptoms. At first, doctors believed his problems were connected to his recent trip to South America, and it was not until 25 September 1995 that ricin was considered the cause. On that day, Farrar called police during a domestic dispute with his estranged wife, Debora Green, a 44-year-old non-practicing oncologist. The police report stated that due to her bizarre behavior, Green was taken to a psychiatric clinic that night. Finding castor beans in his wife's purse, Farrar turned the beans and sales receipt over to police. Green had purchased the castor beans through special order from a garden center in Kansas City, Missouri, and placed them in Farrar's food. It is unclear if she extracted the ricin or merely added the beans to the food. Later, Farrar had to undergo multiple heart and brain surgeries related to the poisoning.

In 1994 and 1995, four Minnesota men were the first to be tried and convicted under the 1989 Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act, for the possession of ricin. Douglas Baker, Leroy Wheeler, Dennis Henderson, and Richard Oelrich acquired this deadly substance in an alleged plot to kill local deputy sheriffs, U.S. Marshals, and IRS agents. The four men were members of a radical tax-protesting militia organization called the Minnesota Patriots Council. The Minnesota Patriots Council was founded by Colonel (Retired) Frank Nelson of the United States Air Force in 1970. The right-wing organization opposed the notion of a federal government and refused to recognize any authority above the local county. Its members protested U.S. taxation policies and met periodically in small groups, or cells. Some militant adherents of the group even met to discuss violent methods (such as blowing up buildings) to combat what they perceived as tyrannical, illegitimate federal authorities. In 1991, Oelrich, Henderson, and Wheeler came across a classified notice in a right-wing publication advertising a mail order ricin kit. The three ordered the ricin kit in April 1991 and intended to mix the ricin with chemicals in order to create an effective delivery system. In early 1992, Henderson took the mixture containing ricin to his friend Douglas Baker's house, where it was stored in a coffee can along with a cautionary note. Following a marital dispute, Baker's wife, Colette, took the coffee can along with several other weapons to the local sheriff's office, which in turn contacted the FBI. It was determined that the coffee can contained 0.7 grams of ricin that was reportedly capable of killing hundreds of people. Baker and Wheeler were arrested on August 4, 1994, and stood trial for the possession of a deadly biological substance at the Federal District Court in St. Paul, Minnesota. The two received two-year-and-nine-months prison terms followed by three-year probationary periods. Henderson and Oelrich were arrested in July and August of 1995, respectively. The two had fled and gone underground upon the news of their co-conspirators' arrests. They stood trial in October and were also convicted of producing and possessing the poisonous substance. In January 1996, Henderson was sentenced to 48 months in prison followed by three years of probation, and Oelrich received a 37-month prison term and three years of probation.

In 1983, Montgomery Todd Meeks, 19, was tried for attempting to murder his father with ricin. He claimed that the act was motivated by his father's abuse. He conducted research on poisons, decided on ricin, and then purchased the material from Aardvark Enterprises in Louisville, Kentucky, for \$200. A classmate went to Kentucky to pick up the purchase, but emptied the vial of ricin into a toilet when he returned to Orlando International Airport. It was alleged that Meeks continued with the murder plan and ceased only when a friend went to the police.

In 1983, two brothers were arrested by the FBI for producing an ounce of pure ricin, which they stored in a 35-mm canister. Officials were directed to the brothers after receiving a tip from an informant. The FBI took the material to the U.S. Army laboratories at Ft. Detrick where it was destroyed.

In 1982 Texas attorney William A. Chanslor, 50, was sentenced to jail for three years and fined \$5,000 for plotting to kill his 39-year-old wife with ricin. He claims that he wanted the ricin to assist his wife in committing suicide. She was paralyzed after having a stroke in 1979. She begged the jury not to convict Chanslor. He put ads in two paramilitary magazines, *Soldier of Fortune* and *Gung Ho*. His ads said, "Wanted: experts in poisons and chemical agents with access to same." He also read at least one book that included information on the toxin. When Chanslor contacted the author of a book on toxins, regarding the acquisition of ricin, the author contacted Canadian law enforcement officials. Police then recorded a meeting between the two where Chanslor purchased a tablet supposedly containing ricin for \$2,500. On August 4, 1982, facing a penalty of 20 years in prison, Chanslor was sentenced to three years in prison and fined \$5,000.

In 1978, Bulgarian dissident Georgii Markov was assassinated with ricin toxin by an operative of the Bulgarian secret service.

JAMES MARTIN CENTER FOR NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES EXPERTS ON BIOLOGICAL AND TOXIN WEAPONS

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U.S. Department of Defense

Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

Press Advisories

No. 024-08

February 28, 2008

Pentagon, Arlington Chemical Test Roundtable Announced

The Pentagon Force Protection Agency's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Explosives Directorate (PFPA-CBRNE), in cooperation with Arlington County, will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of a simulated chemical release in an urban area in early March. This cooperative test will occur in the Crystal City area and will provide valuable information for both Arlington County's and the Pentagon's response to a chemical attack.

A media roundtable to brief interested reporters on the specifics of the test is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. EST, Feb. 29 in Pentagon, Room 5B890.

The study, called the Crystal City Urban Transport Study (CCUTS), will involve releasing a colorless, odorless, tasteless, and inert tracer gas that poses no health or safety hazards to people or the environment. These tracer gases are used commercially for leak detection and building ventilation efforts and were used in a similar atmospheric study in Manhattan, New York in 2005.

A number of air sample collectors will be placed at various locations in Crystal City buildings and parking lots to evaluate airflows in this urban environment. Some outdoor samplers will be mounted on light poles in baskets while others will be placed on the ground. All test equipment will be clearly marked with PFPA and Arlington County contact information. Test equipment should not be touched or moved.

Two days of testing are planned. Each test should last less than six hours. The first two weeks of March are the target timeframe for this weather-dependant event.

There will be no impact to normal activities for any occupants of the test area.

To attend the media roundtable, journalists without a Pentagon building pass should plan to arrive at the Pentagon Metro Entrance no later than 45 minutes prior to the event; have proof of media affiliation and two forms of photo identification. Please call (703) 697-5131 to confirm attendance and for escort into the building.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/advisories/advisory.aspx?advisoryid=2958>

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Janes.com

Non-Subscriber Extract

Maximising resilience: NATO CBRN capabilities

29 February 2008

By Tony Skinner

NATO has been engaged in disaster response since the 1950s but until recent years has not considered the development of civil protection capabilities a central task.

While the impact of the events of 11 September 2001 on strategic outlooks is debatable, the attacks did force the alliance to reassess its response to the threat of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Through a series of initiatives and directives NATO has increasingly become the focal point for the development of capabilities defending against non-conventional (chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear [CBRN]) weapons, both for armed forces on active deployments and for civil protection.

Those involved in the development of NATO-wide CBRN policy and capability development suggest the alliance is in a strong position in this area due to the variable manifestations of the threat - encompassing rogue states, non-state actors and the potential for instability following a wide-scale natural outbreak.

As with much of NATO's current transformation, the development of CBRN capabilities is taking place on three fronts: by assisting member and partner countries in developing national capabilities; by providing a framework for the co-ordination of national efforts; and through the employment of the alliance's existing common capabilities.

The alliance also serves as a conduit for intelligence sharing on proliferation and assessments on the threat of insurgent groups employing CBRN weapons.

There have been comparatively few examples of terrorist groups managing to employ CBRN agents - among the exceptions being the salmonella poisoning of 751 people by the Rajneesh sect in the US in 1984 and the attempts by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in Japan to use chemical and biological agents that resulted in 19 dead and some 1,200 hospitalised in 2004.

However, a 2006 study in the Netherlands, 'Target Europe', which analysed some 50 Islamic extremist terror plots in the EU since the mid-1990s, found that the planned employment of CBRN agents was a factor in around 25 per cent of cases.

Speaking at the WBR Homeland Security Conference in June 2007, William Puttmann from the Defence Policy and Planning Division at NATO's WMD Centre said the alliance's Comprehensive Political Guidance had highlighted CBRN agents and their means of delivery as one of the principal threats to NATO.

"The reality is that a WMD in the hands of a terrorist will at some point in time be used as a weapon to cause mass casualties. This is the new reality. Terrorist violence has changed from agenda-forcing or attention-getting tools of the politically weak to a distinct method of asymmetric conflict employed against adversaries of greater economic, military and political strength," Puttmann said.

Image: A reconnaissance exercise during Multinational Chemical, Biological Radiological and Nuclear [CBRN] Defence Battalion training (SHAPE Photos)

http://www.janes.com/news/publicsafety/jdw/jdw080229_1_n.shtml

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armytimes.com

Judge rules military can require anthrax shot

By Matt Apuzzo - The Associated Press

Posted : Friday Feb 29, 2008 11:07:10 EST

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon can require its troops be vaccinated against anthrax, a federal judge said Friday.

Judge Rosemary M. Collyer said the Food and Drug Administration acted appropriately when it found the vaccine to be safe and approved its use. She dismissed a lawsuit by military officials who argued the drug is unproven and the scientific data unsound.

"The court will not substitute its own judgment when the FDA made no clear error of judgment," Collyer wrote.

The dispute has languished in the court system for years. A federal judge suspended the vaccination program in 2004 after faulting the FDA's process for approving the drug. After the FDA redid the process and again found it to be safe, the military announced plans to reinstate mandatory vaccinations.

That prompted this latest lawsuit by eight military members who argued the vaccine should be optional. A message seeking comment was left with Mark Zaid, an attorney for the plaintiffs.

The Pentagon continues to require the vaccine, saying the program is necessary to protect troops from anthrax attacks.

"We owe it to our service members to give them every possible protection," said Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman. "Force protection is the number-one priority in the Defense Department and the anthrax inoculation program is an important force-protection measure."

http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/02/ap_anthrax_022908/

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Washington Post

March 1, 2008

Pg. 2

Anthrax Ruling To Be Appealed

Judge Dismisses Suit Against Pentagon's Vaccination Policy

By Christopher Lee, Washington Post Staff Writer

An attorney for six Defense Department employees said yesterday that they will appeal a federal judge's dismissal of their lawsuit challenging the Pentagon's policy of compulsory anthrax vaccinations for certain troops.

The employees had argued that, as military personnel, they should not be forced to take the vaccine because there is no scientific proof that it is effective for humans, said Mark Zaid, their attorney. The class-action lawsuit had asked the court to block the Pentagon from inoculating the plaintiffs and to rule that the vaccine was improperly licensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

But U.S. District Judge Rosemary M. Collyer ruled yesterday that the FDA "did not act arbitrarily or capriciously" and granted the government's request to dismiss the case.

Zaid said the FDA incorrectly drew conclusions about the effectiveness of the vaccine in people based on old studies involving animals. "This case has repercussions far beyond the anthrax program," he said. "Anyone who is concerned about vaccine safety should be wary of this judicial decision."

The shots have been required for most military personnel and civilian employees assigned to homeland bioterrorism defense or deployed for 15 or more consecutive days in Iraq, Afghanistan or South Korea.

Cynthia O. Smith, a Defense Department spokeswoman, said troops must be vaccinated to protect against biological attacks.

"The FDA has repeatedly found, and independent medical experts have confirmed, that anthrax vaccine is safe and effective," she said. Heidi Rebello, a spokeswoman for the FDA, said the agency is pleased with the decision.

The lawsuit -- filed against the FDA, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Pentagon -- is the third of its kind and the latest chapter in a dispute that has been going on for at least six years.

It follows another suit by the same group that led a federal judge to halt mandatory vaccinations in October 2004 on the grounds that an FDA review of the vaccine was insufficient. The anthrax vaccine was then administered on a voluntary basis.

After the FDA reviewed the vaccine again and approved it in December 2005, the Pentagon said in October 2006 that it would resume mandatory vaccinations for more than 200,000 troops.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/29/AR2008022903317.html>

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Washington Post

March 1, 2008

Pg. 12

Doors Still Closed In North Korea

Same Day as Historic Concert, Officials Stayed Mum on Arms

By Blaine Harden, Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, Feb. 29 -- Hours before the New York Philharmonic played a historic concert in North Korea, senior officials told a visiting U.S. contingent that they would prefer not to account for weapons-grade enriched uranium that the United States believes the government of Kim Jong Il has produced.

At a lunch Tuesday in Pyongyang, the capital, the North Koreans also said they would prefer not to talk about alleged sales of nuclear material and technology to other countries, Evans Revere, a former U.S. diplomat, said Friday in Tokyo.

North Korea wants those issues "set aside" for now while the United States fulfills commitments it made last year to provide the country with energy assistance and to lift diplomatic sanctions, he said.

Revere was part of the group that met with North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator, Kim Gye Gwan, and other officials. The U.S. contingent also included William J. Perry, a secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, and Donald P. Gregg, a former U.S. ambassador to Seoul.

The Americans had traveled to Pyongyang on the day of the concert to deliver a hopeful message, Revere said, adding that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was briefed in advance on their trip.

The Americans announced at the lunch that "the stars were as well aligned as we had ever seen them" for a breakthrough in U.S.-North Korean relations, said Revere, president of the New York-based Korea Society, which helped set up the New York Philharmonic's trip.

But the North Koreans were told that for such a breakthrough to occur, they would have to provide "some clarity" on their long-suspected production of enriched uranium, Revere said. They were also told, he added, that North Korea must disclose whether it has sold bombmaking material and technology to other countries, including Syria.

"We made all these points in a stark fashion," Revere said. "And we heard from them a very clear desire to avoid talking about these issues, if at all possible. We told them that that position was not tenable, in the view of Washington and other world capitals."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/29/AR2008022904183.html>

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International Herald Tribune

March 1, 2008

Military Aid Talks With Poland Off To 'Good Start,' U.S. Envoy Reports

By Associated Press

WARSAW--American and Polish officials "made a good start" on Friday during high-level talks about how Washington could help to modernize the Polish military in exchange for the East European country's allowing a missile-defense base on its territory, a U.S. envoy said.

Stephen Mull, acting U.S. assistant secretary of state for political and military affairs, said the two countries had "agreed to focus in particular on Poland's air defense, command and control and mobility needs."

"While we have much work to do on both sides to clarify the details of how we can work together on these issues, we made a good start today," Mull said after talks with Poland's chief missile defense negotiator, Witold Waszczykowski.

Warsaw has demanded U.S. help in upgrading Polish armed forces in return for the basing of 10 missile interceptors in the country. The American missile-defense plan would also involve a radar system in neighboring Czech Republic.

Washington says the system is necessary to protect the United States and its European allies from possible future attacks from Iran.

The Polish Foreign Ministry released a statement confirming that the talks had focused on the topics cited by Mull, but did not elaborate.

Poland is pushing for Patriot 3 or Thaad missiles, and has identified 17 areas of its military that the United States could help modernize.

The Polish prime minister, Donald Tusk, is scheduled to visit Washington from March 8 to 10 and meet with President George W. Bush.

Meanwhile, Czech and American negotiators will resume talks next week in Prague about the radar base, the Czech Defense Ministry said Friday. Bush and the Czech prime minister, Mirek Topolánek, said after meeting in Washington on Wednesday that they were close to reaching a deal.

A Czech demand for strict environmental rules has delayed an agreement, the two leaders said. Despite that, both Bush and Topolanek said that the dispute could be settled quickly.

Also at issue in the talks is the legal status of American troops at the base, including who would have penal jurisdiction.

Russia fiercely opposes the U.S. plans for missile-defense sites in Eastern Europe, contending that the system would threaten its own deterrent strength and rejecting U.S. assurances that the system is not aimed at Moscow.

The Kremlin has threatened to target antimissile sites in Poland and the Czech Republic with Russian missiles in response.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/02/29/europe/poland.php>

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Washington Post

March 2, 2008

Pg. 16

U.N. Says Iran May Not Have Come Clean On Nuclear Past

By Joby Warrick and Colum Lynch, Washington Post Staff Writers

Iranian documents obtained by the United Nations' nuclear watchdog strongly suggest that Iran was working on a nuclear weapons design as recently as four years ago, U.N. officials disclosed last week in a private briefing.

The documents suggest that Iran's research on nuclear weapons continued for several months after U.S. intelligence officials say the effort was suspended, the International Atomic Energy Agency's top nuclear security expert told diplomats in Vienna, according to notes taken by a participant.

Olli Heinonen, the IAEA's deputy director general, was elaborating on a public report released Feb. 22 that questioned whether Iran had come fully clean about its nuclear past. In the report, the watchdog agency said Tehran had not credibly explained documents that appeared to point to research programs devoted to uranium processing, high explosives and missiles design -- all of which can be used in making nuclear weapons. Iran has denied ever seeking nuclear weapons and has dismissed the documents as fakes.

In the technical briefing Monday with diplomats from IAEA member states, Heinonen offered new details about the Iranian documents, according to notes obtained by The Washington Post. He revealed that the IAEA had collected corroborating evidence, from the intelligence agencies of several countries, that pointed to sophisticated research into some key technologies needed to build and deliver a nuclear bomb.

Some of the documents, for example, described studies on modifying Iran's Shahab missile to allow it to accommodate a large warhead, which would detonate 600 meters above its target. The feature would make sense only if the warhead was nuclear, Heinonen suggested.

Iran now faces a tougher challenge in convincing the world that it has never sought nuclear arms, according to a nuclear weapons expert who reviewed the briefing notes.

"The information is much harder to refute," said David Albright, a former U.N. weapons inspector and president of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security. "It seems to point to work on nuclear weapons -- even if the program wasn't coherent and even if a decision was never made to actually build a weapon." Iran's U.N. ambassador, Mohammad Khazee, told reporters Thursday that the new allegations being studied by the IAEA are "baseless" and that Iran has never sought to acquire nuclear weapons.

The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote tomorrow on a third resolution imposing travel and financial sanctions on Iranian individuals and institutions. The measures are intended to pressure Tehran into suspending its enrichment of uranium and other nuclear programs that have a potential military use.

A Security Council diplomat said Iran's top envoy to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, reacted angrily to last week's briefing. He said that the documents could have been manufactured by any student who was "paid \$100" and that the IAEA had exceeded its mandate as a technical agency by engaging in intelligence activities.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/01/AR2008030101722.html>

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Reuters.com

Iran may be able to make nuclear bomb by 2015: UK panel

Sat Mar 1, 2008 11:51pm EST

By Adrian Croft, Reuters

LONDON (Reuters) - Iran retains nuclear weapons ambitions and there is a "strong possibility" it could be in a position to quickly make a nuclear bomb by 2015, British lawmakers said on Sunday.

Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee said in a report that sanctions were unlikely to persuade Iran to halt work that could be aimed at building nuclear weapons and said a military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities was also unlikely to work.

It urged Britain to press Washington to talk to Tehran directly about its nuclear program, which Iran says is solely to generate power but which Washington alleges is aimed at building nuclear weapons.

"Based on the evidence we have received and our own visit to Iran, we believe its nuclear ambitions remain," said Mike Gapes, chairman of the committee which has held hearings with officials and experts and visited Iran last November.

Technological constraints were likely to prevent Iran developing a nuclear weapon, if that was its goal, in the near future, the committee's report said.

But Gapes, a member of the ruling Labor Party, said: "There is a strong possibility that it could establish a 'breakout' nuclear weapons capability by 2015."

A "breakout" capability meant "the ability to manufacture a nuclear device within a short period of time by virtue of its non-military nuclear technical capabilities and assets," the report said.

The United Nations Security Council is expected to vote on Monday on a resolution imposing a third round of sanctions on Iran over its nuclear program.

Iran has ignored previous resolutions demanding it freeze its uranium enrichment program, which can produce fuel for nuclear power plants or atomic weapons.

A U.S. intelligence estimate last December which concluded Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003 has dampened international support for further sanctions.

The Foreign Affairs Committee said Iran must not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon, saying that if it did so, it would be likely to lead to other states in the Middle East seeking to do the same.

It said current international sanctions were "not sufficiently robust to coax (Tehran) into suspending its enrichment" while future sanctions were "likely to remain ineffective".

"A military strike would be unlikely to succeed and could provoke an extremely violent backlash across the region," it said.

It recommended that the British government urge Washington to "change its policy and begin to engage directly with Iran on its nuclear program".

Washington has said it is open to talks with Iran but says Tehran must give up uranium enrichment first -- a condition the committee said Tehran was very unlikely to accept.

(Editing by Myra MacDonald)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSL0114884220080302>

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New York Times

March 3, 2008

Meeting On Arms Data Reignites Iran Nuclear Debate

By William J. Broad and David E. Sanger

Last Monday, the chief United Nations nuclear inspector gathered ambassadors and experts from dozens of nations in a boardroom high above the Danube in Vienna and laid out a trove of evidence that he said raised new questions about whether Iran had tried to design an atom bomb.

For more than two hours, representatives to the International Atomic Energy Agency were riveted by documents, sketches and even a video that appeared to have come from Iran's own military laboratories. The inspector said they showed work "not consistent with any application other than the development of a nuclear weapon," according to notes taken by diplomats.

The presentation caught no one's attention more than the Iranian representatives in the room, who deny Iran is developing atomic weapons. As they whipped out cellphone cameras to photograph the screen, Iran's ambassador, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, nearly shouting, called the evidence baseless fabrications, the diplomats said, and warned that the agency was going down "a very dangerous road."

Suddenly, the confrontation with Iran had reignited.

The display of new and newly declassified information is part of the latest effort to pressure Iran to disclose information about its past atomic activities and offer proof that its current program is benign. France's ambassador, François-Xavier Deniau, said questions raised by the Vienna meeting had opened a "new chapter" in the West's effort to keep Iran from acquiring nuclear arms, according to participants.

This confrontation is different from the long-running American-led campaign. Gone are the veiled threats of military action from the White House. The wind largely went out of that effort in December, when American intelligence officials surprised Western allies — and angered Bush administration hawks — with a report saying Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program in 2003. Last Monday's presentation in Vienna did not contradict that conclusion, but disclosed many new details suggesting the depth of Iran's past work on weapons design.

The new effort to pressure Iran has been led by Europeans and the international atomic agency. The United Nations Security Council is scheduled to vote Monday on a resolution on Iran, the third that would impose economic sanctions for its continued refusal to stop enriching uranium for nuclear fuel.

The United States has been relegated to more of a behind-the-scenes role, largely because the December intelligence report left it with little leverage to continue confronting the Iranians. That assessment revealed a contentious debate within the government over how imminent a threat Iran posed — a division that raged in secret while the report was being prepared, and continues to this day. "The administration is in real disarray," said David A. Kay, the nuclear specialist who led the fruitless search for unconventional weapons in Iraq after the invasion. "And the Europeans are picking up the ball."

The wrangling in Washington spilled into the open when a declassified summary of the report, known as a National Intelligence Estimate, was made public. The White House argued that Iran remained a serious nuclear threat even if it was not working on a weapons design. It has been defended by intelligence professionals as an independent judgment, and by Democrats who greeted its conclusion as a bar to military action.

But several allies said the report's conclusion was too sweeping, and President Bush has made clear that he shares that view. Thomas Fingar, the deputy director of national intelligence for analysis who runs the National Intelligence Council, which produced the estimate, said "the vast majority of concerns" he had heard from abroad were, "'Why would you say something that complicates our policy making?'" instead of "You have misinterpreted the evidence.'" At issue is how to judge whether a nuclear program is intended for military purposes.

For years, Washington had based its assessment that Iran was pursuing nuclear weapons largely on its steady work to enrich uranium, which could be used for bombs but which Iran says it wants to fuel power reactors. Forcing Iran to give up enrichment became the goal.

The December estimate, by contrast, focused on weapons design. Based on fresh intelligence that Iran's bomb design program was suspended in 2003, it said Iran was not pursuing nuclear weapons, even though uranium enrichment continued.

Perhaps no one exemplifies the debate more than Mike McConnell, the director of national intelligence, who has backpedaled from the conclusions of the intelligence estimate — even though he supervised it.

The report said intelligence analysts did not know enough to say whether Iran "currently intends to develop nuclear weapons." But on Feb. 26, Mr. McConnell told a radio interviewer, "Our estimate is they intend to have a nuclear weapon."

Mr. McConnell declined to comment for this article.

In interviews, officials acknowledged that one element of the friction over Iran is the shadow of Iraq. Intelligence agencies, having been roundly criticized as having overestimated the threat of Iraq and justifying the invasion, came to a conclusion on Iran that undercut the administration's political position.

Mr. Bush and Mr. McConnell have both acknowledged that the December estimate damaged the effort to isolate Iran. Recently, the administration has taken steps to counter that effect.

It decided to let the atomic energy agency confront Iran with what it says is the best evidence of Iranian weapons work, some of which was revealed last Monday in Vienna. The United States had previously shown some of that evidence to selected countries, but it had declined to declassify all of the material, which was contained on a laptop apparently slipped out of Iran by a technician with access to the nuclear program. While American and energy agency officials say the documents appear real, they cannot definitively authenticate them or tie them to Iran.

At the meeting in Vienna, Olli Heinonen, who runs the atomic agency's inspection teams, said his presentation drew on materials from "several member states" as well as the agency's own information, according to diplomats at the meeting. But getting answers to the questions raised has been difficult, Mr. Heinonen said, largely because the Iranians have barred his team from many suspected nuclear facilities and from interviewing Mohsen Fakrizadeh, whom he described as the military official in charge of Iran's nuclear effort.

Intelligence Scramble

The Bush administration's strident confrontation with Iran reached a high point last October when the president suggested that if Iran obtained nuclear weapons, it could lead to "World War III."

But at that moment, the nation's intelligence agencies were concluding that Iran had stopped its work on weapons design four years earlier, based on a new definition of what constituted a nuclear weapons program.

For decades, American spies assessed weapons programs mainly by a nation's ability to make bomb fuel. That is because experts say that perfecting the process of enriching uranium or making plutonium is far more difficult than

designing warheads or building missiles to deliver the weapons. With Iran, they looked at progress in making centrifuges, machines that spin faster than the speed of sound to enrich uranium ore. In 2004, American intelligence agents obtained the laptop filled with simulations and accounts of experiments on nuclear arms. Officials saw it as strong evidence that Iran was designing warheads. Still, a 2005 intelligence estimate focused on Iran's development of "fissile material," whose atoms can split or fission in bursts of atomic energy. "Iran could produce enough fissile material for a weapon by the end of this decade," it warned.

As they drafted the new report last June, intelligence officials again argued that Iran's slow but steady progress in making nuclear fuel was aimed at obtaining the bomb, according to interviews with senior intelligence officials. Then, last fall, quite suddenly, the intelligence community switched emphasis. It played down its historic focus on bomb fuel after penetrating the heart of Iran's weapons program, the officials said. Federal officials said spies had obtained notes and journals showing that Iran's warhead designers had complained bitterly about having to stop work in late 2003, apparently in response to international pressure. The breakthrough rocked the intelligence world. Instead of viewing Iran's veiled program through a purloined laptop or spy satellites, Washington had a narrow but direct conduit into the most tightly held of Iranian secrets. It was exactly what it lacked in prewar Iraq.

While getting favorable reviews, the new information also stirred disputes over whether it was strong enough to overturn the historic emphasis on nuclear fuel, federal officials said.

"There was lots of internal debate," said an official involved in the assessment.

A senior intelligence official who helped oversee the estimate's production said he viewed the new emphasis on warhead design as "a judgment call" and potentially "a big mistake."

A Report's Shock Waves

The rewritten intelligence estimate, made public on Dec. 3, began with a blunt assertion: "We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program."

That sent shock waves around the globe and instantly deflated the American-led effort to isolate Iran. The threat of an attack on its nuclear sites quickly lost force, as did the diplomatic effort to ratchet up sanctions.

Yet the estimate's fine print said that basically nothing had changed. Iran, it held, still could in theory make a bomb sometime between 2009 and 2015, the same general range as in previous Iran estimates.

Behind the radical change of tone — and the headlines — lay an inconspicuous footnote at the bottom of the first of the unclassified version's three pages. "For the purposes of this Estimate," it said, Iran's nuclear weapons program is defined as including warhead design but excluding Iran's "declared civil work" to enrich uranium.

Officials later said intelligence analysts had rarely if ever based a weapons estimate on such a narrow definition. So too, the footnote and estimate said nothing of Iran's expanding effort to build long-range missiles.

Publicly, figures like Henry A. Kissinger and James R. Schlesinger railed at the narrow definition. Privately, so did some officials at the nation's nuclear laboratories. They charged that the Energy Department in its consultations had deliberately excluded fuel experts and analysts suspicious of Iran.

"We have been marginalized in the intelligence community," a senior official said in an interview. "It boggles the mind," he added of the new focus on weapon design.

Some allies were equally befuddled. Israel complained directly to President Bush during his visit there in January, and then turned over a dossier to American intelligence officials disputing key elements of the report. After the report was issued, France's president, Nicolas Sarkozy, said, "Notwithstanding the latest elements, everyone is fully conscious of the fact that there is a will among the Iranian leaders to obtain nuclear weapons."

In interviews, intelligence officials vigorously denied that the estimate reflected any narrowing for political reasons. Mr. Fingar, who heads the National Intelligence Council, said that politics played no role in the assessment and that he knew of no exclusion of dissenting viewpoints over what constituted a nuclear arms program.

"The definition and that footnote," he said in January, were widely read and approved by the intelligence community. "If there was a concern," he said, "it never came to me."

Even so, the estimate's top author, Mr. McConnell, has recently expressed his own concerns over the effect of the report.

Under intense questioning at a Senate hearing, he conceded Feb. 5 that the report erred in focusing so intently on warhead design, calling it "probably the least significant part" of Iran's program. "In retrospect," he said, "I would do some things differently."

Some analysts say the legacy of Iraq may have encouraged the intelligence community to avoid saying anything that could later be seen as overestimating the Iran threat.

"Intel officers are human too," said Paul R. Pillar, a top Middle East analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency from 2000 to 2005 and now a professor at Georgetown University. "What we might be seeing here is the price to be paid for the vilification of the community on the Iraq issue."

The Diplomatic Push

The publication of the estimate gave China and Russia the chance to water down the next set of proposed sanctions against Iran. They argued that if American intelligence agencies doubted Iran's rush for a bomb, how could harsh sanctions be justified? The chief American negotiator, R. Nicholas Burns, who left his job on Friday, countered that the sanctions were all about Iran's refusal to stop enriching uranium, not about weapons. But that argument was a tough sell.

With the Iran debate losing steam, the Bush administration allowed the atomic energy agency to present to a wide array of diplomats some of the intelligence that the United States had obtained — including from the 2004 laptop. (While the data has been declassified, the Bush administration has refused requests to make it public.)

That is what allowed Mr. Heinonen to make at least part of his presentation last Monday. He knew the most compelling aspect was the video of the work for designing a nuclear warhead to fit atop the Shahab 3, Iran's most advanced missile. European capitals are within its range, which helps explain the new enthusiasm by France and Germany to lead the charge against Iran.

Mr. Heinonen stopped short of accusing Iran of trying to produce a weapon, saying that had to be the subject of more analyses and inspections.

Gregory L. Schulte, the American ambassador to the atomic agency, said in an interview that the chief inspector "was very careful not to reach any conclusions, but he also very clearly said that the secretariat could not agree with Iran's conclusions that these were baseless accusations."

Diplomats said the Vienna presentation bolstered the Security Council's resolve to impose a third round of sanctions. The Council is still failing in its 18-month effort to force Iran, through escalating sanctions, to stop enriching uranium.

As the Council considers additional ways to punish Iran's nuclear leaders, European countries are planning to offer new incentives to Iran if it agrees to halt its uranium enrichment, diplomats said last week.

That could include proposals for joint ventures between European and Iranian oil companies, and talks with Iran on regional security issues. The United States is said to have no intention to join the new incentives.

"If the Europeans are going to pick up the ball on the threat, they feel they also have to propose a way out of the political impasse," said Dr. Kay, the former weapons inspector. "They're about as pessimistic as we are on whether the Iranians will respond. But they feel you have to take that chance."

Elaine Sciolino, Warren Hoge and Helene Cooper contributed reporting.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/03/world/middleeast/03nuke.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Vienna+Meeting+On+Arms+Data+Reignites+Iran+Nuclear+Debate&st=nyt&oref=slogin

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Los Angeles Times

The 'why' of ricin cache is still a puzzle

Investigation following discovery of the lethal poison moves to Utah, where a now-critically ill man once lived.

By Ashley Powers, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

March 3, 2008

LAS VEGAS -- As mysteries go, this one offers an intriguing trail of clues: A man who suddenly falls ill. A deadly toxin. Guns. An "anarchist-type textbook."

Beyond the items found in Roger Von Bergendorff's motel room here, authorities have revealed little about how the 57-year-old ended up unconscious and in critical condition, possibly from exposure to the poisonous substance ricin. Von Bergendorff -- a graphic designer who was struggling financially -- was hospitalized on Feb. 14 after struggling to breathe. Police say they found several vials of ricin and the castor beans needed to make it in Von Bergendorff's room at the Extended Stay America Hotel.

A book in the room was marked at a section about the poison -- 500 micrograms of which (about the size of the head of a pin) -- can kill a human.

There was no apparent link to terrorism, officials said, and they have yet to find any more ricin.

FBI spokesman Juan Becerra said Sunday that the focus of the investigation was shifting to Utah. Authorities -- dressed in hazardous-material protection suits -- searched a home and garage-size storage units in the Salt Lake City suburbs where Von Bergendorff lived.

Von Bergendorff spent much of his adult life in Orange and San Diego counties. Public records indicate that several tax liens were filed against Von Bergendorff in San Diego County in the mid-1990s. He also filed for bankruptcy in 2000, records show.

After being evicted from a Utah apartment a few years ago, he moved into his cousin Tom Tholen's basement, said Brad Ewell, one of Tholen's neighbors in Riverton, Utah.

Von Bergendorff didn't pay rent, ran up the Tholens' phone bill using dial-up Internet service and stayed longer than Tholen expected, according to Ewell. "The Good Samaritan got bitten," he said.

Neighbors called Von Bergendorff standoffish. A hulking man with wavy hair, he worked with computers and delivered pizza. Much of his time was spent with his pets, including a German shepherd.

But Von Bergendorff "dressed normal; he wasn't a shaved-head supremacist guy or someone you'd think would cause trouble," Ewell said. Von Bergendorff joined a Mormon congregation and told neighbors he had overcome a drug addiction.

Eventually, Von Bergendorff moved into a neighbor's camper trailer. The neighbor, John Walster, asked Von Bergendorff to leave in August 2006, but did not specify why, according to the Salt Lake Tribune.

Neighbors heard little more about Von Bergendorff until a few weeks ago. He had been hospitalized at Spring Valley Hospital in Las Vegas and apparently called his cousin.

Last week, when motel managers began the process of evicting Von Bergendorff, they found four firearms and the book tabbed to the ricin section, according to the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Days later, Tholen discovered the castor beans and ricin vials, which he took to hotel managers, authorities said. Health officials are still working to determine whether the poison caused Von Bergendorff's illness.

Ricin -- made from the waste left over from processing castor beans -- has only one legal use: cancer research. The toxin can cause vomiting, diarrhea, fluid in the lungs and respiratory or organ failure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Its reputation stems in part from the death of a Bulgarian writer in the 1970s, the CDC said.

Georgi Markov was attacked by a man in London who had rigged an umbrella to inject the writer with ricin.

In 2003, a gambling executive committed suicide in Las Vegas by injecting himself with the poison, and the next year, the substance was found in the of then-Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.).

In Riverton, neighbors were stunned that Tholen, a retired art teacher who hosts barbecues and passes out Christmas cookies, had become entangled with the investigation.

"You couldn't see him being involved in something like this," said Chelsea Neider, a student who has lived nearby for four years.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-na-ricin3mar03,1,1783612.story>

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Reuters.com

U.S. envoy leaves China with no North Korea meeting

Mon Mar 3, 2008 1:28am EST

BEIJING (Reuters) - The top U.S. negotiator on North Korea was to leave China on Sunday without meeting his North Korean counterpart, who he said was "not ready" for talks aimed at pushing forward a stalled nuclear disarmament plan.

Christopher Hill flew into the Chinese capital on Saturday, returning after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hinted at progress toward ending the impasse over disarming North Korea during talks in Beijing last week.

Hill had indicated earlier in the week that he was returning to Beijing because China was trying to set up a meeting with North Korea's top nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-gwan, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported.

Hill met Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei, but was stood up by the North Korean envoy.

"They're looking at the ideas and haven't decided what they want to do," Kyodo quoted Hill as saying.

Hill was referring to ideas proposed by China on how to move forward a 2005 agreement under which North Korea committed to abandon all nuclear weapons and programs in exchange for economic and diplomatic benefits.

"We thought they might be ready to discuss it with us, and clearly they were not," Hill said.

North Korea, which tested a nuclear device in October 2006, has shut down its Yongbyon reactor in accordance with the agreement struck at multilateral talks that group North and South Korea, the United States, Japan, Russia and host China.

But that accord has since become bogged down over Pyongyang's failure to make a declaration of its nuclear programs by the end of last year.

U.S. officials and analysts say the declaration's main sticking point is North Korea's reluctance to discuss any transfers of nuclear technology, notably to Syria, as well as its suspected pursuit of uranium enrichment.

Hill, who stayed longer than planned last week in Beijing to work on reviving the disarmament effort, was scheduled to fly to Vietnam on Sunday.

(Reporting by Lindsay Beck; Editing by Sanjeev Miglani)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/politicsNews/idUSPEK476820080303>

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