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Washington Post

March 27, 2008

Pg. 4

U.S. Initially Unconcerned About Erroneous Shipment

By Josh White and Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writers

After Taiwanese officials reported in early 2007 that four packages they had received from the U.S. military did not contain the helicopter batteries they had expected, U.S. officials suggested that Taiwan simply dispose of the incorrect items -- which turned out to be parts for U.S. nuclear missiles.

In e-mail correspondence over several months between U.S. defense officials and Taiwan, the U.S. officials assumed that the erroneous shipment simply contained the wrong type of batteries, not that Taiwan had received four classified nuclear-related items that never should have left U.S. soil.

U.S. government officials familiar with the communications said yesterday that at some point between August 2006 and last week, Taiwan opened the drum-shaped packages and noticed that the items inside were labeled "secret" and that they included Mark 12 nose cones, which are used with U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Since early 2007, Taiwan had been asking U.S. officials to either reimburse it for the missing batteries or replace them, as part of billions of dollars in U.S. military sales to Taiwan over the past decade. But after the situation was resolved and U.S. authorities told the Taiwanese to get rid of the items they had received -- missing warning signs of a serious breach -- the Taiwanese double-checked the packages because of worries that discarding them could be dangerous.

Taiwan last week alerted U.S. authorities that it believed the military had shipped items related to U.S. "warheads," sparking alarm at the highest levels of the Pentagon. It is unclear when the Taiwanese opened the packages and how long they knew they had classified U.S. materials in their possession, but the drums were in a warehouse for more than 18 months while the United States did not know the sensitive materials were missing.

"Last week they said they didn't think they could destroy these items and said it was warhead-related material," said one U.S. government official, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity because the incident is under investigation. "That was the first time there was any indication we weren't dealing with a battery. All the alarm bells went off at that point."

The parts that the United States shipped to Taiwan are Mark 12 nose-cone assemblies, which have 1960s technology and are being phased out by the Air Force in favor of nose cones compatible with newer Mark 12A warheads for its Minuteman III missiles. There are about 700 Mark 12 assemblies in the U.S. inventory, and the Air Force has been shipping excess to the Pentagon's Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) for storage at an air base in Utah. The assemblies do not contain nuclear material but help trigger a detonation as a ballistic missile nears its target.

U.S. officials said yesterday it appears that workers at the DLA initially did not determine that the materials Taiwan received were classified because the outside of the packages had unclassified inventory codes that indicated they contained batteries. Quarterly inventory checks -- about 10 of them -- also missed the error, and the discrepancy was not discovered until Thursday. Air Force and DLA spokesmen declined to comment and referred questions to the Pentagon.

"Once the error was verified, the department took immediate action to acquire positive control of the equipment and commence the recovery process," said Brian Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman. "Positive control was gained in hours, not days."

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates learned of the error late last week, informed President Bush and immediately ordered an investigation, which will focus on whether the Air Force properly labeled the packages for shipment to the DLA and then how the DLA stored, tracked and shipped them overseas. Authorities said the packages were inappropriately stored in an unclassified warehouse and that the outer packages might have been mislabeled. The incident has been embarrassing to Defense Department officials charged with securing and maintaining the U.S. nuclear arsenal and has added tension to the relationship between the United States and China.

China responded sternly yesterday to the news of the erroneous shipment, issuing a vehement protest, warning of "disastrous consequences" and demanding a thorough investigation.

The response reflected the depth of Chinese opposition to U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing maintains is a part of China. In particular, China has responded with irritation to a recent effort by the Taiwanese Defense Ministry to buy advanced F-16 warplanes to enhance its fleet of older F-16s bought from Washington a decade ago.

Bush administration officials said the nose-cone assemblies had been returned and that U.S. diplomats contacted China and Taiwan to explain the error after it was discovered last week. But the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it expects more information about what occurred and that the shipment could affect relations between Washington and Beijing.

"We demand that the U.S. side thoroughly investigate this matter and report to China in a timely manner the details of the situation and eliminate the negative effects and disastrous consequences created by this incident," said a declaration attributed to Qin Gang, a ministry spokesman. "We urge the U.S. side to keep the promises they have made . . . and stop weapons sales and military contacts with Taiwan to avoid endangering peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the improvement in Sino-U.S. relations."

In a phone conversation yesterday between Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao, the subject of the errant delivery came up briefly, according to national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley. "It came up very briefly, and basically the president indicated that a mistake had been made," Hadley told reporters. "There [was] very little discussion about it."

Such classified materials are supposed to be closely monitored, and defense officials said the shipment to Taiwan almost certainly occurred because of human error.

"The investigation will determine the integrity of the shipping containers and their contents during the foreign military sales process," said Air Force Secretary Michael Wynne, in announcing the erroneous shipment on Tuesday.

Staff writer Michael Abramowitz in Washington and correspondent Edward Cody in Beijing contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/26/AR2008032600666.html>

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Washington Post

March 27, 2008

Pg. 11

Kim's Realm Shows Signs Of A Rift

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

North Korean military and industrial officials are "extremely unhappy" with the unprecedented access that U.S. diplomats were given to a missile factory last year, suggesting a split within the North Korean government about a pending deal to abandon its nuclear weapons, according to reports for Congress prepared by a staff member and a former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory who recently traveled to Pyongyang.

Keith Luse, an aide to Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), and Siegfried S. Hecker, a former Los Alamos director now at Stanford University, spent four days in North Korea last month as negotiations remained stalled on whether North Korea would submit a complete declaration of its nuclear programs, as called for in the six-nation deal reached in February 2007.

North Korea maintains that it fully disclosed its nuclear activities last year, but it has slowed its disabling of a nuclear facility because the other parties have fallen behind in providing promised fuel oil. The other countries, led by the United States, said technical glitches led to the delivery delays but said North Korea has failed to disclose its interest in uranium enrichment and whether it cooperated with Syria in an alleged nuclear program destroyed by Israeli fighters last September. The declaration was due Dec. 31.

At a news conference in Washington yesterday with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said "time and patience is running out" and urged North Korea to "submit the declaration as soon as possible."

North Korean ruler Kim Jong Il is often depicted as an absolute ruler. But the reports to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee suggest that he must accommodate other powers in the country. Luse reported that the North Korean military was resisting efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to complete a deal.

"Chairman Kim's best efforts to orchestrate a balance among competing interests within the North may be a 'stretch too far' for North Korean military hardliners," Luse wrote. "Discarding the jewel of their arsenal will be difficult."

North Korea has a plutonium reactor at Yongbyon, which it restarted in 2002 after the collapse of a Clinton-era agreement that had frozen it. The Bush administration accused North Korea of cheating on the deal, claiming Pyongyang had purchased thousands of aluminum tubes that intelligence analysts said were being used in a clandestine uranium-enrichment program.

Plutonium and highly enriched uranium are different routes to building nuclear weapons. While North Korea harvested enough plutonium for more than six bombs from the restarted reactor -- which it is now disabling -- questions have persisted from the U.S. side on whether Pyongyang has pursued uranium enrichment.

In his own report, Hecker noted that North Korean officials asserted they had resolved all queries on uranium enrichment, even allowing U.S. experts last year to visit a missile factory using the tubes and permitting them to take samples home.

Government scientists later discovered traces of enriched uranium on the samples.

When Hecker asked to see the factory, he was told that North Korean "military and industrial officials were extremely unhappy with the access the Americans were granted and with the fact that they were given samples of the aluminum tubes. . . . I was told that neither I, nor anyone else, will get access again."

North Korean officials said that they had told U.S. officials they have 30 kilograms of reprocessed plutonium, which Hecker noted was lower than U.S. estimates of 40 to 50 kilograms. He told North Korean officials that it would "require substantial cooperation and transparency" to verify the number, and they responded that they were prepared to provide it.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/26/AR2008032602973.html>

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New York Times

March 27, 2008

Pg. 15

Putin Invites Bush To Confer In Move To Avoid Public Clash

By Steven Lee Myers

WASHINGTON — President Bush announced Wednesday that he had accepted an invitation by President Vladimir V. Putin to visit Russia next week, signaling an effort to avoid a public clash over NATO and missile defenses when Mr. Bush travels to Europe next week.

The meeting — expected to take place on April 5 and 6 in Sochi, a resort city on the Black Sea — is likely to be the last between them before Mr. Putin steps aside as president and is replaced by his protégé, Dmitri A. Medvedev.

Mr. Medvedev is also likely to attend the meetings for what would be his first substantive discussions with Mr. Bush.

Mr. Bush's secretaries of state and defense, Condoleezza Rice and Robert M. Gates, went to Moscow this month after the president had sent a letter offering to formalize negotiations on a series of disputed issues.

Those included the administration's plans to base parts of a missile defense system in Poland and the Czech Republic, which Russia opposes, as well as stalled efforts to resume negotiations on reductions and verification measures for the two countries' strategic nuclear arsenals.

"I'm optimistic we can reach accord on very important matters," Mr. Bush said in a meeting with foreign reporters, according to a transcript released by the White House. "I think a lot of people in Europe would have a deep sigh of relief if we're able to reach an accord on missile defense. And hopefully we can."

Despite increasingly anti-American remarks, Mr. Putin's government has appeared open to Mr. Bush's proposals. The exact details of those have not been made public, but officials have said that they are intended to win Russia's acquiescence to missile defenses in Eastern Europe by promising transparency.

A delegation of senior Russian officials held still more talks here Wednesday in an effort to fashion agreements before Mr. Bush's trip, which begins Monday.

The focus of Mr. Bush's trip is a meeting of NATO's leaders in Bucharest, Romania. Among the items on the agenda are the question of membership for three more countries — Albania, Croatia and Macedonia — and a more tentative "road map" toward membership for Ukraine and Georgia, both former republics of the Soviet Union.

Russia has expressed hostility to any movement by Ukraine and Georgia toward joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. While Mr. Bush has expressed support for both countries' membership, other allies appear wary of offending the Russians. As a result, officials and diplomats have said, the NATO allies are expected to sidestep the issue.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/27/washington/27prexy.html?ref=world>

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Miami Herald

March 27, 2008

Pg. 1

Uranium Cache Linked To FARC Rebels

The Colombian military claimed it has found uranium belonging to FARC rebels.

By Frances Robles

Colombian authorities said they seized up to 66 pounds of low-grade uranium hidden off the side of a road in southern Bogotá on Wednesday, which the Colombian Defense Ministry claimed belonged to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

The Colombian Defense Ministry said the discovery adds weight to the evidence reportedly found in a laptop computer belonging to slain guerrilla leader Raúl Reyes, which indicated the rebel group was interested in buying and selling the chemical on the international underground market.

But the 30 kilos of uranium found in plastic bags dug up about three feet from a road in southern Bogotá was "impoverished," the ministry said, and in that state could not have been used to make a radioactive bomb.

Authorities were waiting for further analysis to determine how dangerous the material found really is, armed forces commander Freddy Padilla said at a press conference late Wednesday.

It was not clear if Colombian authorities meant that they had found depleted uranium, which is the residue left after the mineral is processed to make nuclear energy or nuclear weapons.

In its natural state, uranium has low radioactive power and it has to be enriched through a sophisticated process to generate nuclear energy or to make nuclear weapons. According to Colombian daily El Tiempo, the country does not possess the technology to enrich uranium.

A U.S. State Department duty officer reached late Wednesday said the department was aware of the reports, but declined to comment.

The Colombian government has used details of an alleged deal to buy up to 50 kilos of uranium at \$2.5 million a kilo found in e-mails on Reyes' computer to prove the FARC was planning to enter the international terrorism trade from its sanctuary in the jungle about one mile from the Colombian-Ecuador border.

A ministry statement made public Wednesday said that on March 20 informants gave military intelligence officers a sample of uranium allegedly acquired by FARC rebels. Mining experts analyzed the sample and on Tuesday confirmed it to be "impoverished" uranium.

The informants led the military to the rest of the stash in Pasquilla, a district in Bogotá's Comuna 20 neighborhood, the ministry said. The uranium was found Wednesday, hidden near the road that leads to San Juan de Sumapaz, a longtime rebel stronghold.

RCN TV showed footage of jeans-clad authorities pulling white cloth bags out of the brush off the side of a road. Two pieces, one rectangular and another round, each about 33 pounds, were found covered in dirt, Padilla said. "According to the informants, it's the material the FARC was negotiating that appears in Reyes' seized computer," Padilla said. "The seizure is of great benefit, because it prevents the FARC from counting on this kind of material" which they have wanted since 2005, he said.

He said the material was transferred to the government mining ministry for more analysis on where it came from. Padilla added the informants were people close to "Belisario" whose name appeared in Reyes' computer as the person charged with finding the radioactive material. Belisario, Padilla said, is not a guerrilla but rather a business contact.

Word of a possible effort by Colombian rebels to acquire uranium was first revealed earlier this month when the Colombian National Police rifled through one of several computers found at a bombed rebel camp.

One of the computers contained a Feb. 16 e-mail discussing a deal to buy uranium, which can be used to make dirty bombs in which conventional explosives disperse radioactive materials. The e-mails suggested that the FARC may have intended to sell the uranium to a third party rather than use it themselves.

"Another of the themes is the one on uranium," said a note allegedly written by a man identified as Edgar Tovar to Raúl -- an apparent reference to Reyes, the FARC's No. 2 man.

"There's a man who supplies me with material for the explosive we prepare, and his name is Belisario and he lives in Bogotá," the note reads. "He sent me the samples and the specifications and they are proposing to sell each kilo for two and a half million dollars, and that they supply and we look for someone to sell to, and that the deal should be with a government that can buy a huge amount. They have 50 kilos ready and can sell much more."

Colombian Vice President Francisco Santos later said the note proved the FARC was "negotiating to get radioactive material, the principal base for making dirty weapons of destruction and terrorism."

Some experts questioned whether the deal was legitimate, and the FARC denied it.

"Only developed nations like the United States and others have the conditions and the technology required to process uranium, not a guerrilla movement that still fights for people's dignity with rifles and even sticks," a FARC statement previously published by the Colombian media said.

Miami Herald Washington correspondent Pablo Bachelet and special correspondent Jenny Carolina González contributed to this report.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/558/story/471745.html>

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Yahoo! News

US, SKorea losing patience with NKorea

By FOSTER KLUG, Associated Press Writer

Wed Mar 26, 6:43 PM ET

WASHINGTON - The United States and South Korea said Wednesday that patience is wearing thin among international negotiators pressing North Korea to hand over a promised declaration of nuclear weapon efforts.

A spat over the North's declaration, which was due by the end of last year, has deadlocked six-nation nuclear talks. Disarmament negotiators insist that it address claims of a secret uranium enrichment program and allegations that the North transferred nuclear technology to Syria.

"Time and patience is running out," South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said at a news conference with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

Rice, after a private lunch meeting with Yu, told reporters that "it is really time now for there to be movement on the declaration."

"We've been at this for quite a long time," she said.

Separately, President Bush called Chinese President Hu Jintao to discuss efforts to rid North Korea of its nuclear weapons. The leaders pledged to continue urging North Korea to deliver its declaration, the White House said.

At the State Department, Rice was asked if the Syria allegations were holding up the North providing a list. She said the U.S. expects the declaration and "any associated documents will show the full range of the North Korean programs and activities."

In an effort to make progress, the U.S. has indicated a willingness to give North Korea some leeway on how to present its declaration, including the possibility of separate documents.

During talks among the Koreans, China, Japan, Russia and the United States in October, the North promised to lay out its long history of nuclear weapons development in a formal declaration by the end of 2007, a step toward eventually giving up its atomic bombs and the means to make them. In exchange, North Korea was to receive aid and political concessions, including its removal from U.S. terrorism and sanctions blacklists.

North Korea says it gave the U.S. a list of its nuclear programs in November. The Bush administration says it never received a "complete and correct" list.

The chief U.S. envoy at the disarmament talks, Christopher Hill, said Tuesday that back-channel diplomatic discussions with North Korean officials could break the impasse in negotiations. He provided no details.

North Korea has insisted it does not have an active uranium program. It also denies accusations it spreads its nuclear expertise beyond its borders.

Yu said Wednesday that he and Rice also mapped out details for a mid-April summit between newly elected conservative President Lee Myung-bak and Bush at the Camp David presidential retreat.

Lee, who took office last month, has steered his government's North Korea policy away from the path favored during the past decade of liberal governments, which were reluctant to publicly criticize North Korea. Lee has promised a tougher stance in dealing with South Korea's impoverished neighbor.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080326/ap_on_go_pr_wh/us_koreas_nuclear;_ylt=Ajo26DZOyUnVvHj3sQzjmksD5gcF

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Washington Post

March 28, 2008

Pg. 3

Gates Orders Nuclear Inventory

Control Measures To Be Reassessed

By Josh White, Washington Post Staff Writer

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has ordered a complete inventory of the nation's nuclear arsenal and all associated components after the discovery last week that four secret nuclear missile parts had been mistakenly sent to Taiwan, an error that went unnoticed for more than 18 months.

Gates had already ordered a high-level investigation into how the four nose-cone fuse assemblies for U.S. intercontinental ballistic missiles were shipped overseas in place of common helicopter batteries -- the military's second major nuclear-related incident in less than a year. Senior Pentagon officials have called the episode "extremely embarrassing," and it has both strained relations with China and called into question the U.S. military's ability to maintain its arsenal of catastrophic weapons.

"This is about the trust and confidence of the American people and our stewardship of the most dangerous weapons in the world," said Geoff Morrell, the Pentagon's press secretary. "Getting to the bottom of this incident and ensuring our nuclear arsenal and associated components are properly safeguarded must be a top priority of this department. Secretary Gates believes this situation is totally and completely unacceptable."

Gates has ordered the Air Force, the Navy and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) to take inventory of and assess control measures for all nuclear weapons and their associated parts within 60 days, "to verify positive control and accountability of all such materials," according to a memo released yesterday. While the United States has tight control procedures for such devices and equipment, those measures did not prevent the nose cones from being shipped overseas without anyone noticing.

The measures also failed last August, when the Air Force unknowingly flew nuclear warheads between North Dakota and Louisiana, losing track of them for 36 hours.

Taiwan received the four ballistic missile fuses from the DLA in August 2006, instead of the helicopter batteries that it was supposed to get as part of billions of dollars in U.S. military sales to the country. Taiwanese officials had been contacting the United States over the past year to determine what to do with the erroneous items, with U.S. officials at one point instructing their disposal, U.S. authorities told The Washington Post this week.

Last week, Taiwanese officials told the United States that they believed they had received "warhead-related" materials, sparking efforts to safeguard and retrieve the items.

Officials in Taiwan confirmed those accounts, with one defense official telling parliament that Washington was passive in responding to reports from Taiwanese military officials, who discovered the mistake in late 2006, according to the Kyodo News Service.

"We informed the U.S. of the erroneous shipment. . . . Afterward, they didn't do much about it," Vice Minister of Defense Lin Chen-yi told parliament. He said U.S. officials, even a year after they were notified, told Taiwan to handle the situation itself.

Early indications are that the nose cones' outer packaging was mislabeled, and an investigation aims to determine how a string of security failures occurred.

Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), co-chair of the House Bipartisan Task Force on Nonproliferation, said yesterday that the recent errors show that the military needs to revamp its control procedures.

"Otherwise, we run the risk that the next time our sensitive equipment ends up in the wrong hands, it won't simply be a matter of 'return to sender,'" he said in a statement.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/27/AR2008032703440.html>

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Los Angeles Times

March 28, 2008

North Korea Test-Fires Missiles

Some see the short-range launches as a bid to pressure U.S. and South Korea. Seoul calls them routine.

By Ching-Ching Ni, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

BEIJING — North Korea test-fired several short-range missiles off its west coast today in a possible effort to show dissatisfaction toward the new South Korean government and lack of progress in nuclear disarmament talks.

The missile launches, reported by Yonhap news agency citing unidentified government officials, came a day after the government in Pyongyang expelled South Korean experts at a joint industrial zone just north of the shared border.

"This looks like typical measures on the part of the Kim Jong Il regime to exert pressure on South Korea and the U.S.," said Joseph Cheng, a political scientist at the City University of Hong Kong. "They want to attract attention and highlight the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula."

South Korea, however, downplayed such concerns in a statement posted on a government website.

"The government regards North Korea's missile firing as merely a part of its ordinary military training," presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan told Yonhap, the statement said. "President Lee Myung-bak was briefed on the news of North Korean missile launches while presiding over a meeting of senior presidential secretaries, but didn't show any extraordinary response."

One of the reasons why the North may be feeling ignored is that the United States is preoccupied with a presidential election and seems unlikely to be pushing for any major breakthroughs in the laboring six-nation nuclear talks, Cheng said.

North Korea also is angry at Washington for maintaining that Pyongyang is still pursuing a uranium-based atomic bomb program, and asserts that it has taken steps to prove that the charge is untrue. "The United States is clinging to shabby magic to make us a criminal in order to save face," the North Korean Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the government's official Korean Central News Agency.

"If the United States keeps delaying the resolution of the nuclear issue . . . it could gravely affect disablement of nuclear facilities," the statement said.

North Korea had agreed last year to shut down and disable its sole functioning nuclear reactor, at Yongbyon, and other atomic facilities in exchange for aid and political concessions. Washington has insisted that it still has not received a full account of the North's nuclear activities.

Now Pyongyang may be growing impatient, especially at the end of a harsh winter in which fuel and food shortages could be at their worst.

South Korean President Lee, who took office a month ago, has taken a tougher line toward the communists to the north than his predecessors, including threatening to link future economic cooperation with the resolution of the nuclear standoff, said Hak Soon Paik, a North Korean expert at the South's Sejong Institute.

"They need the South Koreans' help and economic cooperation, but the South Koreans' new policy is clearly not well received, and this is a warning to show their discontent," Hak said.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-norkor28mar28.1.1401856.story>

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Fox News

FBI FOCUSING ON 'ABOUT FOUR' SUSPECTS IN 2001 ANTHRAX ATTACKS

Friday, March 28, 2008

By Catherine Herridge and Ian McCaleb

WASHINGTON — The FBI has narrowed its focus to "about four" suspects in the 6 1/2-year investigation of the deadly anthrax attacks of 2001, and at least three of those suspects are linked to the Army's bioweapons research facility at Fort Detrick in Maryland, FOX News has learned.

Among the pool of suspects are three scientists — a former deputy commander, a leading anthrax scientist and a microbiologist — linked to the research facility, known as USAMRIID.

The FBI has collected writing samples from the three scientists in an effort to match them to the writer of anthrax-laced letters that were mailed to two U.S. senators and at least two news outlets in the fall of 2001, a law enforcement source confirmed.

The anthrax attacks began shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks, further alarming a nation already reeling from the deaths of 3,000 Americans. Five people were killed and more than a dozen others were infected by the deadly spores in the fall of 2001.

A leading theory is that the anthrax was stolen from Fort Detrick and then sealed inside the letters. A law enforcement source said the FBI is essentially engaged in a process of elimination.

Much of the early public focus fell on a Fort Detrick scientist named Steven Hatfill, who is suing federal authorities for identifying him as a person of interest. Now the FBI is focusing on other scientists at the facility.

"Fort Detrick is run by the United States Army. It's the most secure biological warfare research center in the United States," a bioterrorism expert told FOX News.

Asked to comment on the likelihood that the anthrax originated at the facility, the expert said:

"It's not surprising, except that it would underscore that there was serious security deficiencies that existed at one time at Fort Detrick — the ability of researchers to smuggle out some type of very sophisticated anthrax weapon and in some quantity. And, nevertheless, it was possible."

In December 2001, an Army commander tried to dispel the possibility of a connection to Fort Detrick by taking the media on a rare tour of the base. The commander said the Army used only liquid anthrax, not powder, for its experiments.

"I would say that it does not come from our stocks, because we do not use that dry material," Maj. Gen. John Parker said. The letters that were mailed to the media and Sens. Tom Daschle and Patrick Leahy all contained powdered anthrax.

But in an e-mail obtained by FOX News, scientists at Fort Detrick openly discussed how the anthrax powder they were asked to analyze after the attacks was nearly identical to that made by one of their colleagues.

"Then he said he had to look at a lot of samples that the FBI had prepared ... to duplicate the letter material," the e-mail reads. "Then the bombshell. He said that the best duplication of the material was the stuff made by [name redacted]. He said that it was almost exactly the same ... his knees got shaky and he sputtered, 'But I told the General we didn't make spore powder!'"

Asked for comment, an Army spokeswoman referred all calls to the FBI. The FBI would not comment about the pool of suspects, but a spokeswoman said the investigation clearly remains a priority.

<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,342852,00.html>

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New York Times

March 28, 2008

Seoul Says North Hurts Only Itself in Expulsions

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea said Thursday that it was "deeply regrettable" that North Korea had ordered South Korean officials to leave its territory, but that the South was undaunted.

The predawn expulsion on Thursday followed an announcement on Wednesday by the new South Korean president, Lee Myung-bak, that his government would not expand economic cooperation with North Korea unless it cooperated in dismantling its nuclear weapons programs.

All 11 South Korean government officials who were based in a jointly run factory complex in Kaesong, 37 miles from Seoul on the north side of the two Koreas' border, returned to South Korea early Thursday after receiving three days to leave.

South Korea said Thursday that North Korea was worsening its own isolation by disrupting the countries' budding economic cooperation. That cooperation can be seen in the Kaesong industrial complex, where 69 South Korean companies employ 23,000 North Koreans to make clothing, watches and other goods.

"We will deal with this issue in a pragmatic way," said Mr. Lee's spokesman, Lee Dong-kwan. He said that the response would mix "flexibility" and "stern principle," but did not elaborate.

The expulsion did not immediately affect the presence of hundreds of South Korean civilians in Kaesong or the operations of their plants. Nor did it stop the daily cross-border traffic of South Korean factory managers commuting from Seoul or of tourists visiting the North Korean town.

President Lee's two liberal predecessors, Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Dae-jung, had pursued a "sunshine policy," providing billions of dollars of aid to North Korea and creating joint economic projects. Mr. Lee, a conservative, has accused them of failing to win concessions on human rights and nuclear disarmament.

His new government has been more willing to join the United States in applying direct pressure on North Korea over its nuclear activities. "Time and patience is running out," said South Korea's foreign minister, Yu Myung-hwan, at a news conference Wednesday in Washington.

In a related move, President Bush, in a telephone call to President Hu Jintao of China on Wednesday, discussed efforts to get the North to keep its promise to give a full accounting of its nuclear weapons programs before talks on dismantling them begin.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/28/world/asia/28korea.html?ref=world>

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Miami Herald
March 28, 2008

Uranium Cache In Colombia Poses Rebel Puzzle

An alleged rebel cache of uranium is raising concern in Washington -- and questions about why the rebels had the radioactive metal.

By Pablo Bachelet

WASHINGTON--The State Department said Thursday it was "deeply concerned" by the discovery in Colombia of uranium linked to a Marxist guerrilla group.

"This underscores the terrorist threat that FARC poses to the people of Colombia and to the region," said State Department spokeswoman Heide Bronke.

On Wednesday, Colombian authorities dug up 66 pounds of what is presumed to be depleted uranium sought by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

The discovery suggests the FARC was dipping into the underworld of uranium trafficking, but the rebels' purpose is unclear. Depleted uranium is mostly used to make armor-piercing projectiles and tank armor but has little use as dirty bomb material and none to make a nuclear weapon. Depleted uranium is a byproduct of a process that turns ordinary uranium into enriched uranium, the material used to make weapons and nuclear energy.

Experts say depleted uranium has no known black-market value other than to trick buyers into thinking they are purchasing something more valuable.

Officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency will arrive next week in Colombia to analyze the uranium and talk about "nuclear security," the government said Thursday in a statement. The visit was planned before the discovery of the uranium but after mention of the FARC's interest in the material was found on computers belonging to slain rebel leader Raúl Reyes in a March 1st cross-border raid on a clandestine camp in Ecuador.

The Bush administration wants to know why the FARC even wanted uranium.

"We have no indication at this time as to how the FARC intended to use the uranium," Bronke said. "We commend the Colombian military for disrupting the FARC activity and hope that Colombian officials conducting the investigation will be able to determine the FARC's intended use."

At Colombia's state geological institute, Ingeominas, director Mario Ballesteros said tests will determine the exact weight and condition of the uranium and just how depleted it is.

The discovery of the uranium is one of the most intriguing chapters to emerge from the computer files belonging to the slain guerrilla leader, which also suggest the FARC had broad financial dealings with Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and contributed to the election campaign of Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa.

José Miguel Insulza, head of the Organization of American States, played down the discovery because the uranium was not the more dangerous enriched kind.

"This is not an imminent problem," Insulza said. "The FARC doesn't have some kinds of missiles that other [illegal] groups have; I would doubt they have any capacity to enrich uranium. But we will look into the matter"

The 34-member OAS is attempting to smooth over a deep diplomatic rift between Colombia and Ecuador following the incursion that claimed 25 lives.

It's not known whether whoever provided the uranium to the FARC could also supply more dangerous materials, or whether the insurgents believed they were buying something more valuable. The computer files suggested the FARC would purchase 50 kilograms of uranium -- 110 pounds -- at \$2.5 million per kilo.

"There have been a lot of scams," said Frank von Hippel, a theoretical physicist and a professor of public and international affairs with Princeton University. "It's not that easy to tell the difference [between highly-enriched uranium and the less dangerous kind], for an unsophisticated purchaser."

Special correspondent Sibylla Brodzinsky contributed to this report from Bogotá.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/558/story/473141.html>

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New York Times

March 29, 2008

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South Korea Plays Down Missile Test By The North

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea drove up tensions on the Korean Peninsula on Friday, test-firing short-range missiles off its western coast, threatening to slow down its promised disabling of nuclear weapons facilities and accusing South Korea of sending warships across a disputed border, which it said could lead to naval clashes.

South Korea played down the missile launchings, saying that they were part of routine military training. "We are closely monitoring the situation," said South Korea's presidential spokesman, Lee Dong-kwan. "We believe North Korea, too, does not want a strain in inter-Korean relations."

In Washington, a White House spokesman, Gordon D. Johndroe, said the missile launchings were "not constructive."

Experts here said the North was escalating tensions to improve its bargaining power in negotiations with Washington and with South Korea over economic cooperation.

"By launching the missiles, North Korea wants to put pressure on South Korea and the United States," said Baek Seung-joo, an analyst at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses in Seoul.

The Yonhap news agency in South Korea quoted government sources as saying that North Korea had launched three to six missiles.

Hours later, North Korea accused South Korea of moving 14 warships beyond the disputed border in the Yellow Sea on Wednesday, and warned of the possibility of naval clashes along the world's most heavily armed frontier.

Also on Friday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry issued a statement blaming the United States for an impasse in six-nation talks on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

The North said it would further slow its disabling of nuclear facilities if the United States continued to demand a fuller accounting of its nuclear activities.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/29/world/asia/29korea.html?scp=1&sq=South+Korea+Plays+Down+Missile+Test+By+The+North&st=nyt>

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Yahoo! News

Tokyo Missile Defense Now Complete

By MARI YAMAGUCHI, Associated Press Writer

Sat Mar 29, 3:22 AM ET

TOKYO (AP) -- Japan installed the final piece of a missile defense system for Tokyo on Saturday, a day after North Korea test-fired a barrage of missiles.

Air Self-Defense Forces personnel set up a land-based Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile interceptor system at the Kasumigaura base in Ibaraki prefecture (state), just northeast of Tokyo, regional defense official Keisuke Tanaka said.

It is the last of four PAC-3 sets deployed around Tokyo to protect the capital region, Tanaka said. The system at the Kasumigaura base, 47 miles northeast of Tokyo, includes five launchers, a special vehicle equipped with radar and another that serves as a control station, he said.

PAC-3 systems were previously installed at three other bases near Tokyo, including Japan's largest naval base in Yokosuka, the homeport of the U.S. Seventh Fleet.

Japan has been rapidly augmenting its missile defense capabilities amid concerns over possible threats from North Korea. The latest deployment, which was planned months ago, came a day after the North test-fired a barrage of missiles in an apparent angry response to the new South Korean government's tougher stance toward Pyongyang. Japan plans to deploy the PAC-3 defense system at several more bases across the country by March 2011.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080329/ap_on_re_as/japan_missile_defense_1

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Los Angeles Times

March 31, 2008

CIA Chief Asserts Iran Nuclear Threat

Hayden says he believes Tehran is pursuing a nuclear bomb, even though intelligence agencies have said the effort was halted in 2003.

By Greg Miller, Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — CIA Director Michael V. Hayden said Sunday that he believes Iran is still pursuing a nuclear bomb, even though the U.S. intelligence community, including his own agency, reached a consensus judgment last year that the Islamic Republic had halted its nuclear weapons work in 2003.

Asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" whether he thought Iran was trying to develop a nuclear weapon, Hayden said, "Yes," adding that his assessment was not based on "court-of-law stuff. . . . This is Mike Hayden looking at the body of evidence."

He said his conviction stemmed largely from Iran's willingness to endure international sanctions rather than comply with demands for nuclear inspections and abandon its efforts to develop technologies that can produce fissile material.

"Why would the Iranians be willing to pay the international tariff they appear willing to pay for what they're doing now if they did not have, at a minimum . . . the desire to keep the option open to develop a nuclear weapon and, perhaps even more so, that they've already decided to do that?" he said.

However, a sweeping assessment from the intelligence community issued in December concluded Iran had suspended its nuclear weapons work in 2003, soon after the United States invaded Iraq, and appeared not to have restarted it.

The CIA director is the latest senior Bush administration official to question the findings of the National Intelligence Estimate, which was widely seen as a setback to efforts by the United States and European nations to step up international pressure on Tehran.

Soon after the report was released, President Bush argued that it should not be seen as a sign that Iran was backing away from its pursuit of the bomb.

"Iran was dangerous, Iran is dangerous, and Iran will be dangerous if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon," he said in a Dec. 4 news conference.

In an interview with ABC News last week, Vice President Dick Cheney alleged that Iran was "heavily involved in trying to develop nuclear weapons enrichment, the enrichment of uranium to weapons-grade levels." International inspectors have not found evidence of such an effort.

Iran has said its nuclear program is strictly for peaceful energy purposes, to generate power. In its latest report, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' watchdog group, said that Iran's uranium enrichment operations at its Natanz plant are yielding material useful for civilian reactors, but far below the 80% or 90% grade needed for weapons production.

Still, the United States and other Western nations fear that Iran's pursuit of dual-use nuclear technologies will eventually enable it to develop nuclear weapons.

The National Intelligence Estimate on Iran represented a startling shift in the intelligence community's views of Tehran's nuclear activity. The report, issued after years of warnings that Tehran appeared bent on building a nuclear bomb, begins by saying that U.S. spy agencies had concluded "with high confidence that in fall 2003, Tehran halted its nuclear weapons program."

The finding was cited as evidence that Tehran was susceptible to diplomatic pressure. It was subsequently attributed to new intelligence that had surfaced in the summer of 2007, including journals kept by senior Iranian officials that documented the decision to suspend the program.

But the report also notes that Tehran "at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop nuclear weapons" and has not ceased civilian uranium enrichment activities that could possibly be converted to weapons development purposes.

The nation's top intelligence official, J. Michael McConnell, testified last month that he "probably would change a few things" if given a chance to redo the report, suggesting that its conclusions had been misinterpreted. The document includes a footnote that specifies that Iran is believed to have stopped only its "weapon design and weaponization work," not the uranium-enrichment work that is widely considered the biggest obstacle to constructing a bomb.

Hayden acknowledged Sunday that U.S. estimates on such matters were now viewed with greater skepticism because assertions about Iraq's alleged stockpiles of banned weapons had been proven wrong.

The U.S. intelligence community "has additional burdens to carry because of the Iraq NIE, in which we got so much of that estimate wrong," he said.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-hayden31mar31.1.7121846.story>

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New York Times

March 31, 2008

North Korea Threatens to Reduce South Korea to 'Ashes' at Slightest Provocation

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea continued Sunday to lash out at the new conservative government in Seoul, threatening to reduce the South to "ashes" if the South Korean government made the "slightest move" to attack. The warning, one of the harshest in years, was a response to a statement by Kim Tae-young, the head of the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff, that his military would strike suspected North Korean nuclear weapons sites if Pyongyang attempted to attack the South with atomic bombs.

North Korea typically makes incendiary statements toward the United States and South Korea when Washington and Seoul conduct joint military exercises or when the countries put pressure on the hard-line government of Kim Jong-il to change its policies. The South Korean government did not respond immediately to the warning Sunday.

The North Korean statement, made by an unidentified military affairs commentator at Pyongyang's state-run Korean Central News Agency, also reiterated the North's threat to end all inter-Korean government contacts unless Seoul apologized for Mr. Kim's remark, which it described as "war mongering."

"Everything will be in ashes, not just a sea of fire, if our advanced pre-emptive strike once begins," the commentator was quoted as saying.

South Korea's new president, Lee Myung-bak, unveiled a major shift last week from the policies of his two liberal predecessors, whose governments had provided billions of dollars of aid for the impoverished North. Mr. Lee said he would drastically curtail such aid unless Pyongyang abandoned its nuclear programs.

Since Thursday, the North has expelled South Korean officials at a joint factory park in the North, test-fired a volley of missiles and threatened to scuttle a deal it made last October to disable its nuclear facilities and give a full list of its nuclear programs in exchange for aid and diplomatic concessions.

At the height of a 1993-94 crisis over the North's efforts to build nuclear weapons, North Korea threatened to turn Seoul into "a sea of fire," setting off a panic in the South that prompted residents to rush to stock up on food.

But after a decade of political reconciliation with Pyongyang, South Koreans have grown less afraid of military threats from the North, and there was no sign of panic Sunday in Seoul.

The South's Defense Ministry has said that Mr. Kim's comment last week about possible attacks on the North should not be interpreted as an intention to launch a pre-emptive strike.

The North has conducted a nuclear test, but it is unclear whether the country has mastered the ability to deliver a working nuclear weapon.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/31/world/asia/31korea.html?_r=1&ref=world&oref=slogin

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