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Shreveport Times
April 9, 2008

Barksdale Air Force Base In Talks To Add Up To 300 Jobs

New posts could result from increased nuclear training

By John Andrew Prime

As many as 300 new jobs may come to Barksdale Air Force Base in coming months, part of increased training and management of nuclear operations there, Louisiana lawmakers say.

U.S. Sen. Mary L. Landrieu, D-New Orleans, and U.S. Rep. Jim McCreery, R-Shreveport, announced Tuesday the Air Force is proposing the jobs "to support increased training requirements and better management of nuclear operations around the country.

"With this increase in manpower, the Air Force has once again recognized the important role Barksdale Air Force Base plays in defending our nation," Landrieu said. "This training mission with a focus on nuclear operations will not only enhance Barksdale's role in a critical area of military defense, but will also provide economic growth to the Shreveport-Bossier area.

"These jobs are in addition to expected growth at the Air Force Network Operations Center, which is a critical component of the Air Force Cyber Command Provisional at Barksdale. Cyber Command is the underpinning of our nation's ability to fight new wars in cyberspace."

The action reflects pronouncements by Air Force leaders in recent months that greater emphasis will be placed on the nuclear strategic mission in the wake of an August incident in which a Barksdale B-52 returning from Minot Air Force Base, N.D., was inadvertently loaded with a pylon of missiles whose nuclear warheads had not been removed. Investigation into that incident determined the fine edge of training and preparedness needed to conduct the nuclear mission had eroded for a number of reasons since the 1990s, when Strategic Air Command was dissolved and the mission was spread between a number of different defense entities.

Landrieu's office said the news developed from a conversation between the senator and Lt. Gen. Robert J. Elder Jr., commander of the 8th Air Force, which has its headquarters at Barksdale.

"I will continue to work with Gen. Elder and Congressman Jim McCrery to ensure Barksdale has the federal funds it needs for Barksdale's expanded mission," Landrieu said.

Said McCrery: "Any time we can sustain and prolong our nation's B-52 fleet, it's a good thing for the Air Force and the country. Over and over, the B-52 has proven its combat prowess. And Barksdale Air Force Base continues to play a key role, both in our national defense and in the economy of the 4th Congressional District. The additional manpower at Barksdale certainly would be welcomed."

Elder said the new faces likely will be Air Force personnel due to deployment requirements but there could be some civilians in the mix.

It was welcome news to retired Brig. Gen. Peyton Cole, a former commander of the 2nd Bomb Wing. "In a way it does surprise me," said Cole, who commanded the wing when the nuclear mission was as front and center as the convention mission is today.

"A lot of times, we take the findings and 'eat the report' and never do anything. I have long felt we have sorely neglected the nuclear mission. That's a mission where there can be zero defects. We can tolerate no errors."

The Air Force also proposes some B-52s will be moved to Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota, but it was unclear where these would come from.

"Regarding the B-52s, the Air Force will program for a force of 44 combat-coded aircraft, with 76 total aircraft inventory," Elder said. "The plan to retire the currently unfunded 18 attrition reserve aircraft is not changed."

That's an increase from the previous total of 56 airplanes maintained in the inventory, of which only 32 had been "combat-coded," he said.

Barksdale will retain all its existing active-duty squadrons, Landrieu's release says. The base is home to three active-duty squadrons, the 11th, 20th and 96th Bomb Squadrons in the 2nd Bomb Wing, and to the 93rd Bomb Squadron in the Air Force Reserve Command's 917th Wing.

The Minot Daily News reported today, however, that a new squadron of B-52s will be formed there under the 5th Bomb Wing, Barksdale's sister unit. The number of combat-ready aircraft at Minot will increase from 12 to 22, the paper said, citing the North Dakota congressional delegation.

The new squadron will join the wing's existing B-52 unit, the 23rd Bomb Squadron. Minot now has 35 B-52s, including 17 in attrition reserve and one on loan to NASA. The rest are here at Barksdale, or deployed.

The change will result in about 1,090 additional personnel at Minot.

<http://www.shreveporttimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080409/NEWS01/804090356/1002/NEWS>

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GovExec.com

Lawmaker plans to attach strings to missile defense funds

By Megan Scully *CongressDaily* April 10, 2008

As the Bush administration nears a formal agreement with the Czech Republic on the U.S. military's European missile defense plans, a key House lawmaker said Wednesday that she would again seek to restrict funding for the effort unless Poland gives the green light to the plans.

During a brief interview, House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee Chairwoman Ellen Tauscher, D-Calif., said she does not want to commit the next administration to fielding missile defenses in Europe unless both countries central to the plans formally agree to host them.

Tauscher, whose subcommittee will mark up its portion of the fiscal 2009 defense authorization bill in the next several weeks, succeeded last year in attaching language to the annual measure that prohibited funding to build or activate European missile defense sites until the countries give their formal approval. The Pentagon has been able to use fiscal 2008 funds to buy 10 missile interceptors, however.

"Unless both are ratified, then this is still an issue that is not resolved," Tauscher said. "I think it's safe to say that if nothing has changed, then there is no reason for Congress to change its opinion, either," she added.

The administration has been working to build international support for its plans to build an early-missile warning radar site in the Czech Republic and erect a launch site for missile interceptors in Poland.

On Wednesday, U.S. and Czech negotiators began another round of talks on the radar site in the hope of wrapping up discussions soon. If all goes as expected, Secretary of State Rice would travel to the country next month to sign an agreement allowing the United States to build the radar site near Prague.

But talks with Poland, which wants any agreement with the United States to include military aid, are moving more slowly.

"I know that they [the administration and Poland] are in significant negotiations," Tauscher said. "I know that there are a lot of intergovernment conversations, but these have to be ratified."

House Armed Services Strategic Forces Subcommittee ranking member Terry Everett, R-Ala., said he would likely agree to continue the types of restrictions outlined in last year's bill. But he also said he may try to tweak the language.

Tauscher last year criticized the administration's efforts to build a long-range missile defense system in Europe and has stressed the need to work with NATO to incorporate defenses against any short- and medium-range ballistic missiles that pose a potential threat to the continent from Iran.

Earlier this month, she applauded the decision by NATO leaders during a conference in Bucharest to assert their commitment to an alliance-wide anti-missile shield that would protect against a wide range of ballistic missiles.

"I'm encouraged to hear NATO leaders, including President Bush, formally recognize the need for a comprehensive NATO effort to better protect the U.S., our service men and women abroad and our allies against a growing missile threat," Tauscher said on April 3.

Russia, meanwhile, continues to oppose U.S. plans to build missile defenses in Europe, citing security concerns.

Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin emerged from a meeting last weekend still divided over the missile defense issue. Putin remarked after the meeting that he would be open to a global missile defense system built by the United States, Russia and European countries.

"This is the first time I've heard Putin step forward and say he would be interested in this common defense shield strategy," Tauscher said. "That's good news."

http://govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=39745&dcn=todaysnews

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CIDRAP

DoD funds development of anthrax vaccine patch

Lisa Schnirring ■ Staff Writer

Apr 8, 2008 (CIDRAP News) – Iomai Corp., a biotechnology company that specializes in needle-free vaccines, announced today that it will receive a grant from the US Department of Defense (DoD) to fund preclinical development of a patch-based anthrax vaccine.

The 1-year grant to Iomai, based in Gaithersburg, Md., will be in the form of a \$943,856 cost reimbursement from the US Army Medical Research and Material Command, according to a press release from Iomai.

Work on the vaccine will combine an antigen developed by Avecia Biologics, Ltd., based in the United Kingdom, with an Iomai adjuvant on a skin patch. Iomai said its next step would be to gauge the stability of the patch to see if it can be stored and shipped at room temperature.

The current licensed anthrax vaccine, made by Emergent BioSolutions Inc., must be refrigerated and is given as a six-shot regimen over 18 months. The US government has been seeking a second-generation product to replace anthrax vaccine adsorbed (AVA), developed in the 1950s, with hopes that a newer product would require fewer doses and produce minimal side effects. Some military personnel have objected to AVA because of reported serious side effects.

"The military has a clear need for an effective anthrax vaccine that can be stockpiled and shipped at room temperature, and we believe that Iomai has the scientific know-how and the manufacturing ability to meet that need," said Stanley C. Erck, Iomai's president and chief executive officer, in the press release.

Iomai says it has developed techniques for drying proteins, such as the anthrax vaccine, to allow administration with a patch the size of an adhesive bandage. The company says it has four other products using the protein-drying technology in its development pipeline; three are aimed at seasonal and pandemic influenza and the other at travelers' diarrhea.

On Apr 2, PharmAthene, an Annapolis, Md., biodefense company, announced that it had finalized its acquisition of the biodefense vaccine business of Avecia, Iomai's anthrax vaccine partner. Iomai acknowledged the sale in its press release but did not give any details about how it would affect preclinical work on the anthrax vaccine patch.

PharmAthene, in its press release, said it had acquired all of the assets related to Avecia's vaccines business, including intellectual property rights to its recombinant protective antigen (rPA) anthrax vaccine and plague vaccine, as well as government contracts relating to the vaccines that total \$60 million.

Avecia has completed phase 2 clinical studies of its rPA anthrax vaccine, according to PharmAthene. In February, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued a request for proposals for an anthrax rPA vaccine for the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), the company said in its press release. The HHS proposal request calls for a company to produce 25 million doses of anthrax vaccine.

On Mar 24, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the government's anthrax vaccine contract could be worth more than \$400 million.

David P. Wright, PharmAthene's president and chief executive officer, said in the press release that preclinical and clinical studies of Avecia's anthrax vaccine show an antibody response and that it is safe and well tolerated.

"If these results are confirmed in future studies, we believe this vaccine could prove to be a superior choice for procurement in the Strategic National Stockpile for civilian defense against anthrax threats," he said.

Federal officials have hit roadblocks in their efforts to add a second-generation anthrax vaccine to the national stockpile. In December 2006, HHS canceled an \$877 million contract with VaxGen, a small biotechnology company based in Brisbane, Calif., after the company had problems with its vaccine's stability and missed a deadline for starting a clinical trial.

In October 2007, a report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) criticized federal anthrax vaccine procurement efforts, saying officials awarded the contract prematurely, had unrealistic expectations of VaxGen, and were confused about how the vaccine would be used.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/bt/anthrax/news/apr0808anthrax.html>

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Washington Times

April 11, 2008

Pg. 6

Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz

New Iranian missile

Iran is developing a new long-range missile that was test launched in February and has more in common with current Iranian missiles than Tehran claims it has for a satellite-launch program, according to Jane's Intelligence Review.

The authoritative British magazine provided an analysis of the launch, based on commercial satellite photographs and Iranian TV footage. The analysis reveals that, contrary to Iranian government claims, the new missile is a single-stage version of the Shahab-3 medium-range missile.

"Tehran has said the February 4th test was the first step toward launching a satellite," the Jane's analysis stated in the April edition. "However, the test appears to be part of the ongoing Shahab program, with no significant improvement in Iran's ballistic missile, and therefore space, program."

"Nonetheless, the Kavoshgar launch site or space center suggests that Iran is seeking to significantly develop its satellite, and hence ballistic missile, program by following a similar path to North Korea's Taepodong-1 missile program."

A defense official told The Washington Times on the condition of anonymity that the missile identified by Jane's apparently resembles the Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile.

Iran appears to be following the example of North Korea in cobbling together a long-range missile. The North Korean Taepodong-2 uses a first stage that is similar to Iran's liquid-fueled Shahab-3, a second-stage similar to the Scud and a solid-fueled third stage.

The missile report will be good news for the Bush administration which has been trying to convince Russia that the growing threat from Iran's missiles highlights the need to set up a third U.S. missile defense interceptor site in central Europe.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20080411/NATION04/540376560>

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London Times
April 11, 2008

Spy Photos Reveal 'Secret Launch Site' For Iran's Long-Range Missiles

By Michael Evans

The secret site where Iran is suspected of developing long-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching targets in Europe has been uncovered by new satellite photographs.

The imagery has pinpointed the facility from where the Iranians launched their Kavoshgar 1 “research rocket” on February 4, claiming that it was in connection with their space programme.

Analysis of the photographs taken by the Digital Globe QuickBird satellite four days after the launch has revealed a number of intriguing features that indicate to experts that it is the same site where Iran is focusing its efforts on developing a ballistic missile with a range of about 6,000km (4,000 miles).

A previously unknown missile location, the site, about 230km southeast of Tehran, and the link with Iran's long-range programme, was revealed by *Jane's Intelligence Review* after a study of the imagery by a former Iraq weapons inspector. A close examination of the photographs has indicated that the Iranians are following the same path as North Korea, pursuing a space programme that enables Tehran to acquire expertise in long-range missile technology.

Geoffrey Forden, a research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, said that there was a recently constructed building on the site, about 40 metres in length, which was similar in form and size to the Taepodong long-range missile assembly facility in North Korea.

Avital Johanan, the editor of *Jane's Proliferation*, said that the analysis of the Iranian site indicated that Tehran may be about five years away from developing a 6,000km ballistic missile. This would tie in with American intelligence estimates and underlines why President Bush wants the Polish and Czech components of the US missile defence system to be up and running by 2013.

The Czech Republic has now agreed to have a special radar system on its soil and the Polish Government is still negotiating with Washington over the American request to site ten interceptor missiles in Poland.

The Kavoshgar 1 rocket that was launched in the presence of President Ahmadinejad of Iran was based on the Shahab 3B missile, a version of the North Korean Nodong liquid-propellant missile.

Dr Forden said that the Kavoshgar launch did not demonstrate any significant advances in ballistic missile technology. “But it does reveal the likely future development of Iran's missile programme,” he said.

At a meeting on February 25 between the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Iranians, UN inspectors confronted them with evidence of design studies for mounting nuclear warheads on long-range missiles. The Iranians denied any such aspirations.

However, according to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, the satellite photographs prove that the Kavoshgar 1 rocket was not part of a civilian space centre project but was consistent with Iran's clandestine programme to develop longer-range missiles.

The examination of the launch site revealed that it was part of a large and growing complex “with very high levels of security and recent construction activity”. It was clearly “an important strategic facility”, Dr Forden said.

The former Iraq weapons inspector said that Iran was benefiting from the North Korean missile programme and following its designs. The Taepodong 1 consisted of a liquid-propellant Nodong (like the Shahab 3) first stage, a liquid-propellant Scud second stage and a solid-propellant third stage.

“The production and testing facility next to the Kavoshgar 1 launch site would seem well positioned to contribute to this third stage,” Dr Forden said.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article3724048.ece

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Seattle Times
April 11, 2008

Iraq's One Problem, But How About Iran?

By Warren P. Strobel, McClatchy News Service

WASHINGTON — The hours of congressional testimony, the speeches and the news conferences this week were all, nominally, about Iraq.

But another, equally explosive question — what to do about Iran — loomed over the presentations by Army Gen. David Petraeus, the U.S. military commander in Iraq, over U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker and over U.S. strategy for the Middle East.

Petraeus and Crocker, arguing that there has been progress in stabilizing Iraq since President Bush ordered a troop buildup there last year, pointed to Iran's support for Shiite militias in Iraq, which they called "special groups," as the No. 1 threat to Iraq's security.

Iran also announced this week that it has begun installing 6,000 high-speed centrifuges to enrich uranium that could be used for nuclear weapons.

While U.S. officials cast doubt on the claim by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the announcement underlined Tehran's refusal to abide by U.N. Security Council demands that it suspend uranium enrichment.

Concerns also have been growing over the unpredictable consequences of a possible attack on Israel by the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah.

The militant Shiite Muslim group blames the Israelis for a car bombing in Syria that killed one of the group's longtime leaders, and anti-terrorism experts in the U.S., Israel and Western Europe think that some attempt at retaliation is almost inevitable.

The Bush administration has been divided over Iran policy almost since the day the president took office and, according to a variety of officials, it remains so today.

One faction, led by Vice President Dick Cheney and including a sprinkling of officials at the Pentagon, State Department and elsewhere, has argued that before Bush leaves office in January, the administration should use military force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities and punish Iran for supporting international terrorism and thwarting U.S. aims in Iraq.

Even supporters of that approach, however, acknowledge that their case was badly, perhaps even fatally, undercut by a National Intelligence Estimate last November that found that Iran, while still enriching uranium, had stopped work on nuclear weapons in the fall of 2003.

A second faction, led by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and much of the uniformed military and the intelligence community, opposes military strikes in favor of continued sanctions, diplomatic pressure and talks with Iran under certain conditions.

This faction appears, for now, to retain the upper hand.

Iranian and U.S. representatives are expected in the coming weeks to hold a new round of security talks in Baghdad, the first since last summer, a State Department official said Thursday.

http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2004341367_iran11.html

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Washington Post

April 11, 2008

Pg. 21

The Holocaust Declaration

By Charles Krauthammer

On Tuesday Iran announced it was installing 6,000 more centrifuges -- they produce enriched uranium, the key ingredient of a nuclear weapon -- in addition to the 3,000 already operating. The world yawned.

It is time to admit the truth: The Bush administration's attempt to halt Iran's nuclear program has failed. Utterly. The latest round of U.N. Security Council sanctions, which took a year to achieve, is comically weak. It represents the end of the sanctions road.

At home, the president's efforts to stop Iran's nuclear program were irreparably undermined by November's National Intelligence Estimate, whose "moderate confidence" that Iran has not restarted nuclear weaponization -- the least important of three elements of any nuclear program -- has promoted the illusion that Iran has given up the pursuit of nuclear weapons. Yet uranium enrichment, the most difficult step, proceeds apace, as does the development of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles.

The president is out of options. He is going to hand over to his successor an Iran on the verge of going nuclear. This will deeply destabilize the Middle East, threaten the moderate Arabs with Iranian hegemony and leave Israel on hair-trigger alert.

This failure can, however, be mitigated. As there will apparently be no disarming of Iran by preemption or by sanctions, we shall have to rely on deterrence to prevent the mullahs, some of whom are apocalyptic and messianic, from using nuclear weapons.

This will be even more difficult than during the Cold War, when we were dealing with rational actors. We will, nonetheless, have to use the Cold War model in which deterrence prevented the Soviets from engaging in nuclear aggression for half a century -- long enough for regime change to make deterrence superfluous. (No one lies awake today worrying about post-Soviet Russia launching a nuclear attack on the United States.) We don't know how long the mullahs will be in power, but until they are replaced, deterrence will be an absolute necessity.

During the Cold War, we were successful in preventing an attack not only on the United States but also on America's allies. We did it by extending the American nuclear umbrella -- i.e., declaring that any attack on our allies would be considered an attack on the United States.

Such a threat is never 100 percent credible. But it was credible enough. It made the Soviets think twice about attacking our European allies. It kept the peace.

We should do the same to keep nuclear peace in the Middle East. It would be infinitely less dangerous (and therefore more credible) than the Cold War deterrence because there will be no threat from Iran of the annihilation of the United States. Iran, unlike the Soviet Union, would have a relatively tiny arsenal incapable of reaching the United States.

How to create deterrence? The way John Kennedy did during the Cuban missile crisis. President Bush's greatest contribution to nuclear peace would be to issue the following declaration, adopting Kennedy's language while changing the names of the miscreants:

"It shall be the policy of this nation to regard any nuclear attack upon Israel by Iran, or originating in Iran, as an attack by Iran on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon Iran."

This should be followed with a simple explanation: "As a beacon of tolerance and as leader of the free world, the United States will not permit a second Holocaust to be perpetrated upon the Jewish people."

This policy -- the Holocaust Declaration -- would not be tested during the current administration, because Iran is not going to go nuclear before January 2009. But it would establish a firm benchmark that would outlive this administration. Every future president -- and every serious presidential candidate -- would have to publicly state whether or not the Holocaust Declaration remains the policy of the United States.

It would be an important question to ask because it would not be uncontroversial. It would be argued that the Holocaust Declaration is either redundant or, at the other extreme, provocative.

Redundant, it would be said, because Israel could retaliate on its own. The problem is that Israel is a very small country with a small nuclear arsenal that is largely land-based. Land-based retaliatory forces can be destroyed in a first strike, which is precisely why, during the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union created vast submarine fleets -- undetectable and thus invulnerable to first strikes -- that ensured a retaliatory strike and, thus, deterrence. The invulnerability and unimaginably massive size of this American nuclear arsenal would make an American deterrent far more potent and reliable than any Israeli facsimile -- and thus far more likely to keep the peace.

Would such a declaration be provocative? On the contrary. Deterrence is the least provocative of all policies. That is why it is the favored alternative of those who oppose a preemptive attack on Iran to disarm it before it can acquire nuclear weapons. What the Holocaust declaration would do is turn deterrence from a slogan into a policy.

It is, of course, hardly certain that deterrence would work on the likes of Ahmadinejad and other jihadists. But deterrence would concentrate the minds of rational Iranian actors, of whom there are many, to restrain or even depose leaders such as Ahmadinejad who might sacrifice Iran's existence as a nation to vindicate their divine obligation to exterminate the "filthy bacteria" of the Jewish state, a "disgraceful stain [on] the Islamic world." For the first time since the time of Jesus, Israel (known as Judea at the time) is the home of the world's largest Jewish community. An implacable neighboring power has openly declared genocidal intentions against it -- in clear violation of the U.N. Charter -- and is defying the international community by pursuing the means to carry out that intent. The world does nothing. Some, such as the Russians, are literally providing fuel for the fire.

For those who see no moral principle underlying American foreign policy, the Holocaust Declaration is no business of ours. But for those who believe that America stands for something in the world -- that the nation that has liberated more peoples than any other has even the most minimal moral vocation -- there can be no more pressing cause than preventing the nuclear annihilation of an allied democracy, the last refuge and hope of an ancient people openly threatened with the final Final Solution.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/10/AR2008041003271.html>

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Washington Post

U.S. Ready to Ease Sanctions on N. Korea

Pyongyang Would Have to Acknowledge Evidence About Nuclear Activities

By Glenn Kessler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Friday, April 11, 2008; Page A15

The United States is prepared to lift two key economic sanctions against North Korea under a tentative deal reached with that country this week, which requires Pyongyang to acknowledge U.S. concerns and evidence about a range of nuclear activities, U.S. and Asian diplomats said yesterday.

The agreement also requires North Korea to finish disabling its main nuclear facility and provide a full accounting of its stockpile of plutonium. But, in a key shift, the two sides agreed to sidestep a dispute over how much detail North Korea must provide about any past uranium enrichment-related activities and its involvement in a mysterious Syrian facility bombed by Israel last September.

North Korea had balked at confirming the Bush administration's allegations, stalling for months a process designed to eliminate its nuclear programs. But after negotiations this week in Singapore and last month in Geneva, the United States and North Korea agreed that Pyongyang must "acknowledge" the allegations without precisely admitting them publicly.

That paves the way, diplomats said, for President Bush to remove North Korea from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism and to exempt it from the Trading With the Enemy Act.

U.S. officials have concluded it is more important to persuade North Korea to surrender its weapons-grade plutonium -- enough for perhaps half a dozen weapons -- than for the process to collapse over the impasse, according to Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill, the chief U.S. negotiator.

"North Korea has difficulty saying things publicly," Hill said. Indeed, the still-secret text of the new agreement has elements similar to the Shanghai Communique issued by China and United States in 1972 during President Richard Nixon's historic visit, in which the two sides offered their own interpretations of key disputes.

Hill said that resolving questions about Pyongyang's interest in uranium enrichment remain important, but that plutonium poses an immediate proliferation risk.

"We are trying to focus on the plutonium as we try to resolve our suspicions on uranium enrichment," Hill said.

Recalling Willie Sutton's line that he robbed banks because "that's where the money is," Hill said: "That's where the bombs are. We don't have suspicions about plutonium; we have cold, hard facts about plutonium."

North Korea acquired much of its plutonium after the 2002 collapse of a Clinton administration agreement barring operation of a plutonium-producing reactor. Bush accused North Korea of cheating on the deal, citing evidence that Pyongyang had a clandestine uranium-enrichment program. Plutonium and highly enriched uranium offer different routes to building nuclear weapons.

Some North Korea experts are skeptical Pyongyang will ever give up its recently acquired plutonium.

Diplomats say Japan is upset that North Korea may be removed from the terrorism list before questions are resolved about North Korea's abductions of Japanese citizens. In its 2004 report, the State Department said that the kidnapping issue was a factor in North Korea's inclusion on the list, but in recent months the administration has steadily unlinked the two issues.

North Korea is one of five countries on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, which makes it subject to severe U.S. export controls, particularly of dual-use technology and military equipment. Those controls prohibit much foreign aid and obligate the United States to oppose financial assistance to the country from institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Under the agreement, Pyongyang would also be freed from financial sanctions imposed by the Trading With the Enemy Act, a 1917 law that allows for a near-total economic boycott of countries at war with the United States.

Hill previously has said U.S. officials concluded that thousands of aluminum tubes acquired by North Korea in 2002 -- which prompted the intelligence finding that Pyongyang was building a large-scale uranium-enrichment program -- were not currently being used to create fissile material.

North Korea allowed U.S. diplomats to visit a missile factory that used the tubes and to carry samples home, but government scientists later discovered traces of enriched uranium on the aluminum samples, officials said.

U.S. officials said further negotiations are needed, and an Asian diplomat said those will involve the amount of plutonium that North Korea plans to declare. Last year, North Korea said that it possessed about 30 kilograms of plutonium, much less than U.S. intelligence had estimated.

"The ball is on the North Korean side," the diplomat said, speaking on the condition of anonymity. "We need to have a clear explanation for the amount, and it has to be verified."

The United States is preparing about 500,000 tons of food aid to assist North Korea with a devastating grain crisis, but Hill said that is unrelated to the nuclear discussions.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/10/AR2008041004082.html>

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New York Times
April 13, 2008
Pg. 11

Atomic Agency Chief To Talk With Iranian

TEHRAN (Reuters) — Iran's top nuclear official will meet this week in Vienna with Mohamed ElBaradei, the United Nations monitoring chief, the official news agency IRNA reported Saturday.

IRNA said the Iranian, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, would meet Monday with Dr. ElBaradei, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany are scheduled to meet Wednesday to discuss sweetening incentives they offered Iran in 2006 to curb its nuclear program, which they suspect has a military purpose.

Iran announced Tuesday that it had expanded its nuclear work, which it insists is to generate electricity, by starting to install 6,000 more centrifuges to enrich uranium.

Since 2006 the Security Council has imposed three rounds of limited sanctions on Iran for refusing to stop enriching uranium, which can be used as fuel in power plants or, if refined further, to provide material for nuclear weapons.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/13/world/middleeast/13iran.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Atomic+Agency+Chief+To+Talk+With+Iranian&st=nyt&oref=slogin

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Baltimore Sun
April 14, 2008

Iran Cancels Talk With Head Of IAEA

VIENNA, Austria--A top Iranian official yesterday abruptly canceled a meeting with the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, dealing a blow to the U.N. monitor's efforts to investigate allegations that Iran tried to make nuclear arms, an agency official said. The IAEA official, confirming Iranian media reports that today's planned meeting was off, told the Associated Press that no reason had been given. But a senior diplomat had told the AP that IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei likely planned to use the meeting with Gholam Reza Aghazadeh, the head of Iran's nuclear program, to renew a request for more information on allegations Tehran had tried to make atomic arms.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nation/bal-te.briefs14apr14,0,1637329.story>

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Financial Times
April 14, 2008

US Softens Demands On North Korea

By Demetri Sevastopulo, in Washington

North Korea no longer needs to provide a complete declaration of its nuclear activities under a tentative deal reached with the US towards de-nuclearising the Stalinist state, according to US officials.

Pyongyang last year agreed to produce a "complete" declaration of its nuclear activities as part of the six-party agreement reached with the US, China, Japan, South Korea and Russia.

The US previously insisted the declaration include details about past uranium-enrichment activities and the proliferation of nuclear technology to Syria. The US has accused Pyongyang of helping Damascus build a secret nuclear reactor that Israel destroyed in a mysterious air strike last year.

After struggling for months to persuade North Korea to provide a full declaration, however, the US has decided to compromise. Christopher Hill, the US negotiator on North Korea, has reached a tentative deal under which Pyongyang would only "acknowledge" US concerns about uranium and proliferation, in a secret side-agreement. Meanwhile, the public document would only include a "complete" declaration about its plutonium nuclear programme. Officials caution that key issues still need to be resolved, but critics have already accused the administration of making a U-turn.

Several elements need to be resolved before President George W. Bush would even consider approving the deal. US officials are preparing to return to Pyongyang, for example, to assess claims that North Korea only harvested 30kg of plutonium. Japan is also insisting North Korea account for Japanese citizens who were abducted by North Korea over several decades.

"That is part of what keeps us from saying we are at breakthrough point," said one senior official.

“I don’t know if the president will go for it,” said a former official. “He has said ‘full and complete’ declaration and no one thinks that’s what it is – even the most ardent supporters.”

The senior official rejected the criticisms, saying people were “pole-vaulting to conclusions”. He said the final deal would provide “clarity” on North Korea’s past uranium and proliferation activities.

In the past, the Bush administration has insisted that North Korea could only be trusted if it accounted for its previous nuclear activities. A second official explained that the US had decided it was more important to focus on the plutonium programme, which produced the nuclear bomb North Korea tested in 2006, than to try to get an admission about past activities.

“Why, if the Syrian reactor is gone, do we need to have the North confess completely?” he said. “Negotiation is the art of the possible. This is a regime that is incapable of certain things, and it is incapable of doing that.”

The official said the US could “negotiate for the next 100 years trying to get these guys to fess up, or you can get them to acknowledge that they did this without them going into specifics”.

Officials said the deal would include a crucial verification mechanism to ensure Pyongyang did not engage in further nuclear activity or proliferation.

“This is not going to be an ideal agreement. That just is not doable under the circumstances,” said the official.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dbdab2c2-0991-11dd-81bf-0000779fd2ac.html>

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