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Washington Times

May 15, 2008

Pg. 1

Nuclear Lab Fails Terrorist Exercise

Drill exposes defense flaws

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

Armed security agents posing as terrorists broke into a secure area at a nuclear weapons laboratory during a recent test, exposing flaws in the protection of stockpiles of plutonium and uranium coveted by terrorist groups and rogue nations seeking to become nuclear powers.

The "force-on-force" exercise at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California pitted two teams of special-operations-trained commandos: one that attacked use of simulated explosives, and a team of defenders who tried to keep them out, said Bush administration officials familiar with the test.

The test was part of regular drills designed to test nuclear defenses and included the attackers' use of all-terrain vehicles and torches to cut through metal barriers, the officials said.

A spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the Energy Department unit that oversees the laboratory 50 miles from San Francisco, said the security problems were revealed in the penetration test, which was first reported by Time magazine.

NNSA spokesman Bryan Wilkes declined to comment on the details of the exercise but stated in an interview that the initial results were "disappointing" and "highlighted the need for improvement."

"This is precisely the reason why we have these kinds of assessments done to test our security," Mr. Wilkes said.

"We are constantly testing our security ... to find areas for improvement."

"The nuclear material at the site is secure, and we have the best security in the government," he said.

The "attackers" were commandos who are part of security teams that guard other U.S. nuclear facilities in the country and were part of a seven-week review of laboratory security at Lawrence Livermore. The simulated attack took place in late April.

The attacking force also began the exercises inside the laboratory's perimeter fences and other defenses inside an area called the Superblock, where nuclear material is stored, the administration officials said.

"The attackers were given tremendous insider knowledge, personnel, site access, facility information and communications advantages that would be highly improbable in a real-world scenario," one official said.

Defenders were limited from firing their weapons inside the area, another advantage for the simulated terrorists.

A Dillon Aero Gatling Gun, capable of firing at high rates, also did not work properly for the defenders because of a hydraulic problem, but the problem has been remedied, the officials said.

Four areas during the security inspection were found to be "effective," while four had ratings showing the need for improvement, Mr. Wilkes said.

One key lesson was that the laboratory's protective forces need to train more often within the actual area they are protecting, he said.

"Immediate compensatory measures were put in place after the inspection, including additional security police officers and relocation of material to more secure storage locations," he said.

"No material or sensitive information at Lawrence Livermore National Lab is at risk, and the security at the site remains strong," he said.

All plutonium at the facility will be removed in four years, he said.

The NNSA said in a statement Friday that a recent "security assessment" identified several areas needing improvement.

Lawrence Livermore is part of the nuclear weapons complex and conducts research on plutonium pits used in nuclear weapons.

Laboratory spokeswoman Susan Houghton said some personnel were reassigned as a result of the security review and one immediate step will be to increase the training of the protective force officers. "We've accelerated training, and we're training against more real-world threats," she said.

The anti-nuclear group Project on Government Oversight (POGO), which monitors security at Energy Department facilities, said in a statement that the penetration drill shows the problems of security at the facility.

"The hydraulic system used to raise the gun from its hiding place inside the back of a small truck failed, making it impossible for the gun to be fired," POGO said, noting that the group has been critical of the deployment of the gun because of its one-mile range that poses a danger to nearby residences.

The group also stated that special response teams of armed security guards were involved in tactical failures during the drill.

"It is important to emphasize that Livermore's security problems are not the fault of the guard force, who have complained about their lack of training and poor tactics," said POGO senior investigator Peter Stockton. "In fact, two security officers were fired for raising these problems."

Time magazine, which first reported the penetration drill in its Monday editions, stated that the attacking force was able to penetrate Building 332, which contains about 2,000 pounds of plutonium and weapons-grade uranium.

The mock terrorists gained access to a payload of simulated fissile material inside the facility.

A POGO report on Lawrence Livermore security problems last year stated that contract security guards are not equipped to adequately secure the site and have limited capabilities to communicate with local police.

"As a result, coordinating an effort to recapture stolen [special nuclear material] is virtually impossible," the report said.

A POGO report from March stated that the laboratory has been unable to meet U.S. government security requirements and was given a waiver from the Energy's nuclear security administration.

"This action comes at a time when experts warn that the threat of nuclear terrorism is growing," the report said.

Michael Leiter, acting director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told a Senate hearing last week that al Qaeda in particular is continuing to seek unconventional weapons.

"Most troubling is the judgment they will continue to try to acquire and use chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear materials in attacks," Mr. Leiter said.

Other senior U.S. intelligence officials have said that one threat scenario is for terrorists to set off a radiological bomb — a conventional bomb laced with nuclear material to enhance its lethality.

Stealing or constructing a nuclear bomb for use in an attack would be more difficult but not impossible.

"More than anywhere else in the nuclear weapons complex, it is essential to prevent terrorists from accessing the nuclear materials at Livermore," said Danielle Brian, POGO's executive director. "Suicidal terrorists would not need to steal the materials; they simply could detonate them into an improvised nuclear device on the spot. That is why it is urgent to remove those materials from the lab, rather than settling for the [Energy Department's] drawn-out timetable of removing the materials by 2012. We hope this debacle will finally light a fire under [the Energy Department] and accelerate their schedule."

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080515/NATION/227131903/1001>

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Washington Times

May 16, 2008

Pg. 6

Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz

China base

Hans A. Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists Nuclear Information Project has found a hidden Chinese nuclear missile base using commercial satellite photos.

The missile deployments were spotted in Delingha, central China and analysis of the GoogleEarth images revealed the Second Artillery Corps 812 Brigade Base with DF-4 intermediate-range mobile and silo-based missiles, and DF-21 medium-range nuclear missiles.

"The region has long been rumored to house nuclear missiles and some details have emerged in recent years, but the new analysis reveals a significantly larger deployment area than previously known to the public, different types of launch pads, command and control facilities, and missile deployment equipment at a large facility in downtown Delingha," Mr. Kristensen said in a statement.

The photos led to identification of 58 launch pads of four basic designs, several of which have been added since 2005.

Bill Gertz covers national security affairs.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20080516/NATION04/1642075>

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New York Times

May 16, 2008

Western Experts Monitor China's Nuclear Sites For Signs Of Earthquake Damage

By William J. Broad

China's main centers for designing, making and storing nuclear arms lie in the shattered earthquake zone, leading Western experts to look for signs of any damage that might allow radioactivity to escape.

A senior federal official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the delicacy of the issue, said the United States was using spy satellites and other means to try to monitor the sprawling nuclear plants. "There appear to be no immediate concerns," the official said.

Nonetheless, "it's potentially a serious issue," Hans M. Kristensen, a nuclear arms expert at the Federation of American Scientists, a private group in Washington, said in an interview. "Radioactive materials could be released if there's damage."

China began building the plants in the 1960s, calculating that their remote locations would make them less vulnerable to enemy attack.

China's main complex for making nuclear warhead fuel, codenamed Plant 821, is beside a river in a hilly, forested part of the earthquake zone. It is some 15 miles northwest of Guangyuan in Sichuan Province. The vast site holds China's largest production reactor and factories that mine its spent fuel for plutonium — the main ingredient for modern nuclear arms.

Jeffrey G. Lewis, an arms control specialist at the New America Foundation, a nonprofit research group in Washington, said the military buildings that make up Plant 821 were probably unusually strong compared with civilian structures.

"I'd rather have been in the reactor building than a grade school" on Monday when the quake struck, he said. The site's various plants "were built as military facilities, and so I wouldn't be surprised if, by and large, they came through pretty well," he added.

Plutonium is a radioactive toxin that can be made into compact nuclear arms that are relatively easy to deliver. For a given size of nuclear blast, plutonium weapons are smaller and lighter than those made of uranium, the other main material used as fuel for nuclear warheads.

It is unclear if the plutonium-production reactor at Plant 821 has operated recently. Mr. Kristensen of the Federation of American Scientists said China was expanding its nuclear forces to 240 warheads in its overall stockpile from around 200.

Reactors are usually rigged to shut down in an earthquake, and it is unclear if the Plant 821 reactor could undergo the same kind of disaster that struck the Chernobyl reactor in 1986. It spewed radioactivity across large parts of Russia and Europe.

"From what I know, they're a really brilliant people and I think they do things the right way," said Danny B. Stillman, a former director of intelligence at Los Alamos National Laboratory and an expert on the Chinese nuclear program because of extensive travels in the 1990s to its secretive sites and bases.

Closer to the epicenter of the quake that struck Monday is Mianyang, a science city whose outskirts house the primary laboratory for the design of Chinese nuclear arms. It is considered the Chinese equal to Los Alamos. Known as the Chinese Academy of Engineering Physics, it too, Mr. Stillman said, houses a reactor, though a smaller one meant for research.

In China, the academy leads in the research, development and testing of nuclear weapons and has centers throughout Sichuan Province.

"I think this is not a no-cost moment for their labs but is not necessarily a human health risk," Dr. Lewis of the New America Foundation, who visited Mianyang last summer, said of the academy's main facilities. "We should keep in mind that there is certainly stuff out in the hills that might have been more seriously damaged."

North of the city, for example, is a plant that shapes plutonium into the compact spheres that ignite nuclear weapons. Nuclear experts said that closer to the epicenter of the earthquake, in rugged hills a two-hour drive west of Mianyang, China runs a highly secretive center that houses a prompt-burst reactor. It mimics the rush of speeding subatomic particles that an exploding atom bomb spews out in its first microseconds.

North in an even more rugged and inaccessible region, nuclear experts said, China maintains a hidden complex of large tunnels in the side of a mountain where it stores nuclear arms.

"It's very close to the epicenter," said one specialist, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because, to the best of his knowledge, the exact location of the secret complex had never been publicly disclosed.

Dr. Stillman, the former intelligence chief at Los Alamos, said he had immense regard for the Chinese weapons scientists and assumed that many of their nuclear plants had been built to ride out the pounding of an earthquake or other disasters, natural or man-made.

"All the Chinese I met in the program were really brilliant," he said. "So I think they do it the right way. I hope."
http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/16/world/asia/16nuke.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Philadelphia Inquirer

May 16, 2008

Russian Leader Tours Missile Base

MOSCOW - President Dmitry A. Medvedev made his debut as the commander in chief of Russia's forces yesterday, touring a missile base and promising to provide the funding needed for nuclear forces to counter global threats.

He inspected Topol-M intercontinental ballistic missiles and spoke to officers at the base near Teikovo, a town in the Ivanovo region about 150 miles northeast of Moscow. "I'm impressed by both the weapons and the level of training," Medvedev said after inspecting the missiles, concealed in a dense pine forest.

Medvedev, sworn in May 7, has avoided the harsh anti-Western rhetoric of his predecessor and mentor, Vladimir V. Putin, but most observers expect him to continue the policies of Putin.

--AP

http://www.philly.com/inquirer/world_us/20080516_In_the_World.html

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Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)
May 17, 2008

New Commission To Study WMDs Announced

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Soon after taking office, the next president will get some advice about how to prevent a nuclear attack on the U.S., researched and written by top experts on weapons of mass destruction.

Over the next six months, a congressionally mandated commission will look at the government's myriad WMD programs to counter nuclear, biological and chemical arms capable of killing great numbers of people and make recommendations on how to coordinate them. The commission was created by a 2007 law in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Commission members, announced Friday, include former Sen. Bob Graham, D-Fla., and former Rep. Tim Roemer, D-Ind., who was a member of the 9/11 commission, set up by Congress to investigate events leading up to the attacks and the government's response. The bipartisan panel made 41 recommendations, including to improve counterproliferation programs, information-sharing among federal agencies and emergency response communications and to create a director of national intelligence and a national counterterrorism center.

Graham, who will be chairman of the WMD commission, said most of the focus will be on nuclear and biological weapons, because those have the greatest potential to kill many people. Graham has already met with the heads of agencies with counterproliferation programs, including the departments of Defense, Energy, Homeland Security and State. The commission has been promised access to whatever information they need, he said.

"We see as our principle audience the new administration and the new Congress," Graham said in an interview.

In a statement Friday, Roemer said, "Far too many WMD components remain unsecured around the world, at a time when the threat from terrorists and extremist groups continues to grow."

The WMD report is due in mid-November.

"The greatest danger of another catastrophic attack in the United States will materialize if the world's most dangerous terrorists acquire the world's most dangerous weapons," according to the 9/11 report, published in 2004.

The other commission members are:

*Graham Allison, former senior Defense Department official with expertise on Russia and the former Soviet Union .

*Robin Cleveland, former senior adviser at the World Bank.

*Stephen Rademaker, former head of the State Department's International Security and Nonproliferation unit.

*Henry Sokolski, former Defense Department nonproliferation expert.

*Wendy Sherman, a North Korea policy expert and counselor to former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

*Former Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo.

*Richard Verma, former senior policy adviser to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/239447.php>

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Washington Post
May 17, 2008
Pg. 14

Japan Feeling Left Out As U.S. Talks To Pyongyang

By Blaine Harden, Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO -- As the Bush administration inches toward a deal to reward North Korea for retreating from its nuclear ambitions, the odd man out in the negotiations is Japan, the closest ally of the United States in Asia.

The Japanese government appears resigned to the possibility that the United States may reach an agreement with North Korea -- and remove it from a list of outlaw countries that sponsor terrorism -- without addressing issues that Japan regards as fundamental to its national interest.

A deal based on nuclear issues alone "would not solve the matter" for Japan and it would refuse to normalize relations with North Korea, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said in a recent interview with The Washington Post.

The Japanese government wants the North to disable 200 to 300 medium-range missiles that Japanese officials say are capable of striking virtually any location inside Japan.

The government here is also demanding that North Korean leader Kim Jong Il provide credible information about the fate of eight Japanese citizens who Kim has admitted were kidnapped in Japan by North Korea agents in the 1970s and '80s. The North Koreans maintain that the eight are all dead, while Japan says they are alive.

The kidnapped citizens are a national obsession in Japan, and politicians here cannot afford to be perceived as neglecting them.

Trying to explain the emotional power of the issue for the Japanese people, a Foreign Ministry official in Tokyo recently compared the best-known of the missing abductees -- Megumi Yokota, who was 13 when she was kidnapped 30 years ago -- to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel Prize-winning novelist who made the world aware of the network of Soviet prisons known as the gulag.

"The nuclear issue, the missile issue that imposes a threat to Japan and the abduction issue would come as a set of three -- called a trilogy," Fukuda said in the interview. "Lacking any one of the three would not solve the matter." Japan is a party to six-nation talks focused on North Korea's nuclear program. In the past year, though, those talks have largely been shaped by negotiations between the United States and North Korea.

Fukuda said he believed that President Bush was "cognizant" of Japan's concerns and that the United States would not conduct any "careless negotiations" with North Korea on nuclear matters. "But, in the meantime, Japan, needless to say, is making efforts of its own to try to resolve" its dispute with North Korea, he said.

Fukuda said that this month he again asked for China's help on the abduction issue, when Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Japan.

The pace of U.S.-North Korean nuclear negotiations appears to have quickened in recent weeks.

On May 8, officials in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, turned over to a visiting U.S. delegation about 18,000 pages of documentation related to materials produced at its main nuclear facility at Yongbyon.

The North Koreans have partially disabled the plant as part of the six-party negotiations and have agreed to blow up the cooling tower within 24 hours of being removed from the U.S. list of sponsors of terrorism, diplomats said.

The United States, for its part, has agreed to remove sanctions against North Korea, once it turns over a verifiable declaration of how much plutonium it has produced. At the same time, U.S. negotiators have eased their demands for other nuclear-related information from Pyongyang.

Watching these events unfold from within easy missile range of North Korea, the Japanese government feels out of the loop, according to several senior government officials. Tokyo is sending word to Washington "that we should not be left alone," said one senior official, echoing a commonly voiced concern.

The security relationship between Japan and the United States is extraordinarily close, with about 50,000 U.S. military personnel based here. Under a postwar treaty, the United States is obligated to defend Japan in case of military attack. Japan pays about 90 percent of the salaries of Japanese civilians who work at U.S. bases here.

When it comes to North Korea, however, Japan stakes out its own policy.

Japan recently renewed trade sanctions that ban all imports from the country and keep its ships out of Japanese ports.

Many countries are making plans to supply large amounts of food aid to North Korea. The United States announced Friday that it would send 500,000 tons, and South Korea, after several months of saying it would condition food aid on removal of nuclear weapons, now says it wants to talk with North Korea about providing food aid.

But the Japanese government is making no such plans. It cut off all aid to North Korea in 2004, after Pyongyang sent the partially cremated remains of what it said were deceased abductees back to Japan. DNA tests proved that the bones were not the remains of any of the missing eight. The apparent attempt to hoodwink Japan enraged the public.

Until its "trilogy" of issues is resolved, the Japanese government categorically rules out any kind of assistance to North Korea -- even if there was a catastrophic famine, as occurred in the 1990s.

In the interview, Fukuda said that it is in North Korea's financial interest to resolve Japan's concerns. When they are resolved, the Japanese have pledged to provide large amounts of cash -- possibly \$10 billion -- and other economic aid to North Korea, as reparation for colonial occupation between 1910 and 1945.

"If I were to put myself in North Korean shoes," Fukuda said, a nuclear settlement without an abductee settlement would not be "a very favorable situation."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/16/AR2008051603920.html>

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Boston Globe

May 17, 2008

North Korea

US Agrees To Deal To Provide Food Aid

WASHINGTON - The United States said yesterday that it has reached a deal with North Korea to provide more than 500,000 tons of food aid over the coming year to the closed-off communist nation. The Bush administration says the aid is unrelated to its nuclear disarmament deal with Pyongyang, although both have involved an unusual intensity

of US diplomacy. "We don't see any connection," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said of the food aid and disarmament talks. "We're doing this because America is a compassionate nation and the United States and the American people are people who reach out to those in need." The United States last provided food aid to North Korea in 2005.

--AP

http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2008/05/17/us_agrees_to_deal_to_provide_food_aid/

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Financial Times

May 17, 2008

US-Russia Nuclear Deal Faces Struggle

By Daniel Dombey, in Washington

The US administration is facing opposition in Congress over a nuclear deal with Russia intended to improve relations between Moscow and Washington.

Some US diplomats are concerned that a fight over the agreement will hinder their efforts to develop a less confrontational relationship with Moscow now that Demetri Medvedev has taken over as Russia's president from Vladimir Putin.

The civil nuclear co-operation agreement would permit the transfer of nuclear technology and materials between Russia and the US.

While it is unlikely that opponents of the deal will be able to obtain a veto-proof congressional majority, US officials anticipate a difficult struggle. Congressional aides say that Congress could eventually refuse to grant funds for implementing the agreement.

"We are confident that the Congress will ultimately agree with us," said Tom Casey, a state department spokesman. "This agreement is extremely important and will help us and help the Russians advance the cause of non-proliferation."

Congressional unease over the deal highlights the obstacles to agreeing accords with Moscow in a US election year in which the three main presidential candidates have called for a more wary approach to the country.

The nuclear co-operation agreement was endorsed by George W. Bush, the US president, last month at a summit with Mr Putin, Russian president at the time, and Mr Medvedev.

Officials say that the deal, which Moscow has long sought, is not only intended to bolster the two countries' ties after a time of strain, but was also offered by the US as an incentive for Russia to sign up to the latest United Nations Security Council resolution censuring Iran over its nuclear programme.

Moscow in March duly supported the UN resolution, which includes milder sanctions than Washington had first wanted.

A number of US congressmen have argued that Russia should not be rewarded with the nuclear agreement when its co-operation over the Iranian nuclear dispute has been much less than Washington had wanted and while Moscow continues to collaborate with Tehran.

"The Bush administration has not received enough support from Russia in dealing with Iran to justify moving forward with this agreement at this time," said Howard Berman, the chairman of the House foreign affairs committee.

The deal will become law unless Congress passes legislation to block it within the coming months.

Edward Markey, a Democratic Congressman from Massachusetts, last week introduced a resolution in the House to block the deal. "Russia's nuclear, missile and advanced conventional weapons co-operation with Iran makes it absolutely inconceivable that the US would enter into nuclear co-operation with Moscow," he said.

He challenged the administration's argument that the agreement was necessary to set up an international nuclear fuel bank in Russia. The idea of such a facility, intended to dissuade countries from developing highly sensitive nuclear technologies, has won broad international support as a non-proliferation measure.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/80f30f52-23aa-11dd-b214-000077b07658.html>

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Boston Globe

May 17, 2008

US Must Fulfill Its Commitment To Diplomacy With North Korea

By John W. Lewis

THE DIPLOMATIC initiative launched by President Bush in the wake of North Korea's nuclear weapon test in October 2006 has made substantial progress in rolling back the nation's drive to become a nuclear power. That success, however, will be for naught if the administration fails to follow through on promises it made to encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to destroy its nuclear weapons programs. The United States must honor its commitments in order to begin normalizing relations with North Korea. Unfortunately, a recent barrage of criticism against the administration's policy aims to derail this process. Even as Pyongyang has taken more than 80 percent of the required steps to disable its Yongbyon nuclear weapons facilities, the fulfillment of US obligations has stalled.

The critics who want to stymie all forward movement, are, for the most part, the same specialists who can take credit for jettisoning in 2003 the agreement with North Korea, known as the 1994 Agreed Framework, which had stopped its plutonium production for almost a decade. Only after the collapse of the Agreed Framework did the North Koreans process the fissile material needed to build and test nuclear weapons. Three years later, in 2006, the president adopted a more realistic policy that is now under attack.

Many of the policy's critics denounce a declaration of the North's nuclear programs that has not yet been finished and argue that we must have clarity about North Korea's role in the construction of a Syrian nuclear facility and its uranium enrichment path to nuclear weapons.

Whatever the role of Korea in the Syrian reactor project, that facility no longer exists. Israel destroyed it last September.

Last year, the United States downgraded from medium to low its confidence level that North Korea continues to pursue a uranium enrichment program. In October, Pyongyang allowed US inspectors into a missile factory, where it said that aluminum tubes suspected of being used in that program were being remade into missile parts. North Korea handed over aluminum samples that later showed traces of enriched uranium, but analysis was inconclusive.

The United States apparently has secured Pyongyang's agreement to pursue these types of "clarifying" activities. Moreover, China has agreed on the importance of a verification regime aimed at assuring a "complete and correct" declaration, and a key goal of the next round of talks would be to fashion that regime.

Recent developments are even more impressive. On May 8, the North Koreans passed to a US State Department official a trove of 18,822 pages of operating records for the Yongbyon 5MWe reactor and reprocessing plant, which date back to 1986. That is 18,822 pages more than we ever had before, and begins a verification process previously impossible.

Also, the International Atomic Energy Agency and US nuclear experts have overseen the shutdown and continuing disablement of all key plutonium production facilities at Yongbyon. Discussions have been held to ship out the monitored unused reactor fuel rods.

If diplomacy is to succeed, Washington needs to begin delivering on some of the promises it has made as part of the Six-Party agreements. It must move toward normalizing relations with Pyongyang: That means beginning "the process of removing the designation of the DPRK as a state-sponsor of terrorism" and starting to "advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to the DPRK."

We know that North Korea seeks better relations with the United States to create the environment essential to facilitate economic recovery, give it more diplomatic space, and smooth the way for an upcoming political succession. Since the New York Philharmonic concert in Pyongyang last February, it has begun portraying the United States in a more positive light to its own people, laying the groundwork for a major breakthrough in relations with the United States.

This breakthrough is needed if the United States is to achieve its ultimate objective: to cap, roll back, and completely eliminate the North's nuclear weapons program.

Critics in Washington, like those in Pyongyang, are afraid of exploring the future and only want to cling to the past. That isn't the way out.

John W. Lewis, professor emeritus at Stanford University, is coauthor of "Negotiating with North Korea: 1992-2007."

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2008/05/17/us_must_fulfill_its_commitment_to_diplomacy_with_north_korea/

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Washington Post
May 18, 2008
Pg. B7

Shaping A Nuclear Iran

The West's Diplomatic Goal Needs to Move From 'Suspension' to 'Transparency'

By Ray Takeyh

As President Bush addressed the Israeli parliament last week, denouncing negotiations with recalcitrant regimes as the "false comfort of appeasement," his diplomats, in conjunction with their European counterparts, offered Iran another incentive package to stop enriching uranium. Even though they are making another effort to disarm Iran through mediation, the administration's approach is hopelessly defective. Beyond insisting on onerous conditions that are unlikely to be met by any Iranian government, the United States and its allies still hope that Tehran will trade its enrichment rights for inducements. If Washington is going to mitigate the Iranian nuclear danger, it must discard the formula of exchanging commercial contracts for nuclear rights and seek more imaginative solutions. Although Iran's theocratic regime is perennially divided against itself, it has sustained a remarkable consensus on the nuclear issue. In today's political climate, neither Western sanctions nor offers of incentives will fracture state unity. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has rejected any compromise, saying that "we will forcefully continue on our path and will not allow the oppressors to step on our rights." In a rare note of agreement, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Khamenei's rival and a politician known for his pragmatism, has similarly claimed, "It is our natural right; if we retreat on this path, we will allow the enemy to interfere with every issue of our country." Across the Iranian political spectrum, the nuclear program is seen as an attribute of a great power and an indicator of scientific achievement. To be sure, an advanced nuclear infrastructure would also provide Iran with a capacity to assemble bombs and attain its regional hegemonic aspirations.

Moreover, while Western powers seem frustrated with their strategies and continuously tinker with them, Iran is both satisfied and successful. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's firebrand president, has noted that the "nuclear issue demonstrates that if we stand firm, they will back down." At a time when the United States is preoccupied with Iraq, and China and Russia both view Iran as a commercial opportunity rather than a strategic threat, it is hard to argue with Ahmadinejad's bombastic assertions.

After three years of inconclusive diplomacy, it is time to discard the formula of "suspension for incentives" for one that trades "enrichment for transparency." Under such a formulation, Western powers would concede to Iranian indigenous enrichment capability of considerable size in exchange for an intrusive inspection regime that would ensure nuclear material is not being diverted for military purposes. Such verification procedures must go beyond the measures in place; they should encompass 24-hour monitoring, continuous environmental sampling and the permanent presence of inspectors who have the right to visit any facility without prior notification. Moreover, Iran's breakout capacity must be constrained by limiting the amount of fissile material it is allowed to keep in stock. The relevant question is no longer whether Iran will have a nuclear infrastructure but how we can regulate the program and make certain that untoward activities are not taking place.

Iran's surging nuclear ambitions reflect the limits of American power. While Bush makes threat after threat and Western foreign ministers gather in various conclaves, Iran continues to expand its nuclear capacity. Though hardly ideal, the advantage of a plan that trades enrichment for transparency is that it meets Iran's nationalistic mandates while also alleviating the great powers' proliferation concerns. Should an intransigent Islamic Republic reject such a generous offer, it might affect Chinese and Russian calculations.

In an ideal universe, Iran would not be spinning a single centrifuge. In the here and now, though, Iran has an elaborate nuclear apparatus and is enriching uranium. It is impossible to turn back the clock. Instead of reviving an incentive package rejected long ago by Iran or issuing calls for military retribution that worry no one in the country's hierarchy, the United States and its European allies would be wise to negotiate an arrangement that would meet at least some of their demands. This may just be the last chance we have before Iran crosses the nuclear weapons threshold.

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<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/16/AR2008051603434.html>

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Christian Science Monitor

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HOUSING SHORTAGE, NUCLEAR MATERIALS AMONG LATEST QUAKE CONCERNS

Tents to house the displaced are running out, and some foreign medical teams have been turned away. China said it was struggling to find shelter for many of the 5 million people whose homes were destroyed in last week's earthquake, while the confirmed death toll rose Tuesday to more than 40,000.

The government was setting up temporary housing for quake victims unable to find shelter with relatives, but a shortage of tents has left officials scrambling.

As relief efforts shift from rescue to caring for survivors, organization has become a barrier. China had said it would accept foreign medical teams, but logistical challenges have caused officials to deny some teams' offers to help.

NUCLEAR CONCERNS

State news agency Xinhua reported that the earthquake buried 32 sources of radiation. The Chinese government had previously said all nuclear facilities affected by the May 12 earthquake were safe and under control, but did not give any details about which sites were affected or whether any were damaged.

Though Sichuan has no commercial nuclear power plants, the province has extensive military and nuclear weapons research facilities. The headquarters for China's nuclear weapons design facility is in Mianyang, and a plutonium processing facility is in Guangyuan, both cities damaged by the quake.

China's military has sent soldiers to protect nuclear sites, and the country's nuclear safety agency notified staff to be prepared in case of an environmental emergency.

An official at a French nuclear watchdog who has seen reports from the Chinese nuclear safety agency said materials found in the rubble appeared to come from hospitals, factories, or laboratories, and were not used for making nuclear fuel or weapons. The radioactive materials likely don't present a major risk to health or groundwater because most of was probably metal equipment, not fuel or something more easily dispersed, the official said.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0521/p25s05-woap.html>

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