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Washington Post
July 10, 2008
Pg. 1

Iran Launches Nine Test Missiles, Says More Are Ready

U.S. Plays Down Military Showdown

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Iran test-fired nine missiles yesterday -- including at least one capable of striking Israel -- and asserted that thousands more are "ready for launch," but Bush administration officials played down the possibility of military action against the Islamic republic and belittled Tehran's claims of progress on its nuclear program. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told reporters the world is not closer to a military confrontation, even though Iran's missile launch came just days after Israel conducted a high-profile military exercise in the Mediterranean. "What we're seeing is a lot of signaling going on," he said, adding that both Israel and Iran "understand [the] consequences" of military action.

Undersecretary of State William J. Burns told Congress that "we view force as an option that is on the table, but a last resort." He said the United States and its allies have made progress in thwarting Iran's nuclear ambitions, saying: "While deeply troubling, Iran's real nuclear progress has been less than the sum of its boasts."

The Bush administration's statements contrasted with tougher talk by the presidential candidates.

Sen. John McCain (Ariz.), the presumptive Republican nominee, issued a statement against Iran yesterday morning that the tests "demonstrate again the dangers it poses to its neighbors and to the wider region, especially Israel."

Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) said that the missile launches show "the threat from Iran's nuclear program is real and it is grave," and that it is necessary to begin "direct, aggressive and sustained diplomacy." The two campaigns then squabbled over whether Obama had supported strong action against the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

With only six months remaining in President Bush's term, senior officials have repeatedly dismissed the possibility of military strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. Instead, the administration has stepped up diplomacy, both toughening sanctions and joining other leading nations in sweetening incentives for Iran to suspend its nuclear activities and begin serious negotiations.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice last month even signed a joint letter to the Iranian foreign minister offering the deal, though the administration has refused thus far to allow a senior U.S. official to join other foreign officials in talks in Tehran.

"This government is working hard to make sure that the diplomatic and economic approach to dealing with Iran -- and trying to get the Iranian government to change its policies -- is the strategy and is the approach that continues to dominate," Gates said. "At this point, I'm comfortable that that remains the case."

Iran has responded with cryptic and somewhat encouraging comments, though it has continued to work on its nuclear program. Javier Solana, the European Union foreign policy chief and main Western interlocutor on Iran's nuclear program, is expected to meet with Iranian officials next week.

Burns said the United States and other nations are working on "an intense public diplomacy campaign to explain what we're offering directly. . . . We want the Iranian people to see clearly how serious we are about reconciliation and helping them to develop their full potential, but also who's responsible for Iran's isolation."

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack noted that in recent years, Iran has conducted similar exercises, including missile tests. But analysts said the tests, along with Iranian rhetoric, are meant as highly symbolic warning to Israel and the United States.

"We warn the enemies who intend to threaten us with military exercises and empty psychological operations that our hand will always be on the trigger and our missiles will always be ready to launch," Revolutionary Guards air force commander Hossein Salami said yesterday, according to the official IRNA news agency.

The Iranian naval games, dubbed the "The Great Prophet 3," are taking place at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic Persian Gulf waterway that handles about 40 percent of the world's oil. U.S. and British warships are also conducting exercises in the Persian Gulf.

The nine missiles tested by Iran included the Shahab-3, which has a conventional warhead weighing one ton and which Iran says has a range of about 1,200 miles -- sufficient to strike Israel and other U.S.-linked targets. John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, a defense consulting group, said that missile, which has been adapted from an old North Korean model, clearly is being refined to deliver nuclear weapons.

"If they are not developing nuclear weapon for this missile, why are they continuing to test it? It is worthless otherwise," he said. "They are still working on a delivery system, which is a major piece of the puzzle of the nuclear program."

Peter D. Zimmerman, a nuclear physicist who was formerly chief scientist for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said that the missile's accuracy is poor and that it could miss its target altogether. A missile with a nuclear warhead, by contrast, would not need to be accurate, since it would destroy an area far beyond its range of accuracy.

The administration's military options narrowed dramatically earlier this year when a national intelligence estimate concluded that Iran had halted work on a nuclear weapon in 2003. The NIE made it much more difficult for the administration to argue to allies that Iran poses an imminent threat, setting back diplomatic efforts for several months.

Still, in recent weeks, the administration has persuaded other countries to ratchet up economic pressure on Iran.

The European Union last month brought sanctions against Bank Mellī, Iran's largest bank. The soaring price of oil has cushioned the blow for Iran, which is the world's fourth-largest oil producer, but Burns noted that "inflation is running at 25 percent and food and housing costs are skyrocketing." Iran must also import about half of its refined oil products, which experts say could be a tempting target or future sanctions.

Israeli officials have warned that in the meantime Iran continues to build up a supply of low-enriched uranium, so that by the end of next year Tehran could have enough material to convert into highly enriched uranium to fuel a nuclear weapon.

"Israel's preference has been to solve this peacefully," said Israel's U.S. ambassador, Sallai Meridor. "For that to have a chance, it will take a dramatic increase in the economic and diplomatic pressure on Iran."
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/09/AR2008070902395.html>

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New York Times
July 10, 2008
Pg. 11

Iran Reports Missile Test, Drawing Rebuke

By Alan Cowell and William J. Broad

PARIS — Iran's Revolutionary Guards test-fired nine missiles in war-game maneuvers on Wednesday, including at least one the government in Tehran described as having the range to reach Israel.

The tests drew sharp American criticism and came a day after the Iranians threatened to retaliate against Israel and the United States if attacked.

State-run media said the missiles were long- and medium-range weapons, and included a Shahab-3, which Tehran maintains is able to hit targets up to 1,250 miles away from its firing position. Parts of western Iran are within 650 miles of Tel Aviv.

The tests, shown on Iranian television, coincided with increasingly tense exchanges with the West over Tehran's nuclear program, which Iran said is for civilian purposes but which many Western governments suspect is aimed at building nuclear weapons. On Tuesday, the United States and the Czech Republic signed an accord to allow the Pentagon to deploy part of its contentious antiballistic missile shield, which Washington maintains is intended to protect in part against Iranian missiles.

At the same time, United States and British warships have been conducting naval maneuvers in the Persian Gulf — apparently within range of the launching site of the missiles Iran tested on Wednesday.

The Israelis — whose air force last month practiced what American intelligence officials called a rehearsal for a possible strike on Iranian nuclear facilities — said they did not want war with Iran. But Mark Regev, a spokesman for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said, "The Iranian nuclear program and the Iranian ballistic missile program must be of grave concern to the entire international community."

The missile tests drew a sharp response from the United States. Gordon D. Johndroe, the deputy White House press secretary, said in a statement at the Group of 8 meeting in Japan that Iran's development of ballistic missiles was a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

"The Iranian regime only furthers the isolation of the Iranian people from the international community when it engages in this sort of activity," Mr. Johndroe said.

He urged Iran's leaders to "refrain from further missile tests if they truly seek to gain the trust of the world," and said, "The Iranians should stop the development of ballistic missiles which could be used as a delivery vehicle for a potential nuclear weapon immediately."

Energy traders reacted to the news by bidding up oil prices, which had been falling in recent days. The most watched oil price benchmark — light, low-sulfur crude for delivery next month — rose more than \$2 a barrel in early electronic trading, though by late morning in New York the gain had been pared somewhat.

Some saw the tests as essentially deterrent in nature. A senior American intelligence official said the missile tests, together with belligerent comments by Iranian officials, seemed part of a strategy to warn Iran's neighbors of its "capacity to inflict pain."

"I think Iran has a hedgehog strategy: mess with me and you'll get stuck," said the official, Thomas Fingar, the deputy director of national intelligence for analysis and head of the National Intelligence Council, during remarks at the Center for National Policy, in Washington.

Iran's Arabic-language Al Alam television said the missiles, launched from an undisclosed location in the Iranian desert, included a "Shahab-3 with a conventional warhead weighing one ton and a 2,000-kilometer range," about 1,250 miles. Cairo, Athens, Istanbul, New Delhi and the Arabian peninsula are within that distance of Iranian territory.

Iranian television showed what appeared to be two Shahabs lifting off within seconds of each other.

"That's surprising," Charles P. Vick, an expert on the Iranian rocket program at GlobalSecurity.org, a research group in Alexandria, Va., said in a telephone interview. "Historically, it's always been single launches."

Mr. Vick added, however, that the Shahab display might be less formidable than Iran had claimed. The missile's conic warhead appeared to resemble an older Shahab model with a range of about 1,500 kilometers, or about 900 miles, rather than the newest one.

The Iranians fired their first Shahab a decade ago, Mr. Vick said, and are now replacing all models with a more advanced missile that burns solid propellants, which are considered better for quick launchings. In a sense, he said, Wednesday's Shahab firings seemed to be simply a way for the Iranians to clear out old inventory. The biggest missile that the Iranians apparently fired — known as the 3a model — is no longer in production, Mr. Vick said.

The 3a model predates the atomic jitters that arose with the debut of the Shahab-3b in August 2004. The 3b's distinctive nosecone — known as triconic and made up of three distinct shapes— is viewed by Western experts as ideal for carrying a nuclear warhead.

The Shahab-3b, Mr. Vick said, is apparently the delivery vehicle intended for the nuclear warhead that, according to a National Intelligence Estimate issued last November, the Iranians worked on until late 2003.

The other missiles in Wednesday's tests were identified as the Zelzal, with a range of 250 miles, and the Fateh, with a range of 110 miles, Agence France-Presse reported. Iranian television showed what was said to be the Shahab-3 missile rising amid clouds of dust from the desert launching site.

Hossein Salami, a commander of the Revolutionary Guards, was quoted as saying: "The aim of these war games is to show we are ready to defend the integrity of the Iranian nation."

"Our missiles are ready for shooting at any place and any time, quickly and with accuracy. The enemy must not repeat its mistakes. The enemy targets are under surveillance," he said.

The missile tests followed remarks on Tuesday by a senior Iranian official warning the United States and Israel against attacking Iran.

"In case that they commit such foolishness, Tel Aviv and the U.S. fleet in the Persian Gulf would be the first targets to burst into flames receiving Iran's crushing response," said the official, Ali Shirazi, a representative of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader.

Like the missile tests, the bellicose language seemed part of an effort by Iran to couple offers of negotiation with warnings of military preparedness.

Negotiations between Iran and the West are scheduled to resume this month, and Iranian officials have sounded mounting alarms about speculation that the United States or Israel could attack Iran's nuclear facilities. On a European tour last month, President Bush repeated Washington's warning that no options had been ruled out. Last weekend, Iran signaled that it would not comply with United Nations Security Council resolutions requiring it to stop enriching uranium. During his European visit, Mr. Bush won pledges from some European leaders to tighten sanctions against Iran.

But Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, said his country was prepared to open comprehensive negotiations with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, and the six world powers — the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China — that have proposed a set of incentives to resolve the impasse over Iran's nuclear program.

Alan Cowell reported from Paris, and William J. Broad from New York. Reporting was contributed by Myra Noveck from Jerusalem, Sheryl Gay Stolberg from Rusutsu, Japan, and Mark Mazzetti from Washington.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/10/world/asia/10iran.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Iran+Reports+Missile+Test%2C+Dr+awing+Rebuke&st=nyt&oref=slogin

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New York Times

July 10, 2008

As Outbreak Affects 1,000, Experts See Flaws in Law

By BINA VENKATARAMAN

More than 1,000 people in 41 states and the District of Columbia have now been sickened in the nation's salmonella outbreak, in what officials said Wednesday was the largest food-borne outbreak in the last decade. And some food safety experts this week tied problems in tracing the source of the contamination to what they say are shortcomings in the Bioterrorism Act of 2002.

Federal investigators have now linked at least some of the outbreak to fresh jalapeños, Dr. Robert Tauxe of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said, though they have not ruled out tomatoes.

But officials have still not pinpointed the source of the contamination. Nor do they know the country or state where the tainted produce was grown, despite a rule issued by the Food and Drug Administration under the bioterrorism law that was intended to give federal officials a way to respond immediately to threats to the nation's food supply.

The rule requires importers, processors and distributors to keep track of where they buy produce and where it goes.

A major hurdle facing investigators in this outbreak, however, is that processors frequently repack boxes of

tomatoes to meet a buyer's demands. In doing so, officials said, they are not required to record the tomatoes' farm, state or even country of origin.

"The purpose of the recordkeeping provision of the Bioterrorism Act was to support going back to the origin of food after people have gotten sick when you are trying to find out how the biological agent got there," said Michael Taylor, a professor at the George Washington University and a former F.D.A. official. "But the provisions are of little or no value with respect to trace-backs of fresh produce because of the amount of shoe leather and time it would take."

The rule requires only that produce handlers keep track of food one step back and one step forward in the supply chain and does not apply to retailers or growers. Because the rule does not specify the format for records, investigators are sifting through a hodgepodge of paper trails to identify the source of the contaminated produce. "It's clear that the F.D.A. is not equipped to deal with a trace-back of the magnitude that they are dealing with right now," said Mike Doyle, director of the center for food safety at the University of Georgia.

Several lawmakers and consumer advocates are calling for a system that requires the industry to track the entire history of food products. Some groups, like the Produce Marketing Association, said they would support national regulation.

Dr. David Acheson, the agency's associate commissioner for foods, said in a telephone interview on Monday that the F.D.A. lacked authority to require full trace-back capability, adding, "It's the industry's responsibility to put that kind of system in place, not ours."

But Dr. David A. Kessler, the F.D.A. commissioner in the Clinton and first Bush administrations, said the agency has the authority to require the industry to trace produce as it travels from "farm to table," but has lacked "the impetus" to do so.

"The technology exists to trace the entire chain of a food product," Dr. Kessler said. "The agency needs to require the industry to put into effect mechanisms to do full trace-back. That regulation could be put in place in months, not years."

Representative Diana DeGette, Democrat of Colorado, said Congress needed to expand the agency's authority to "trace contamination to the source." Ms. DeGette has proposed legislation directing the agency to establish a tracing system.

California requires tomato growers to be able to trace their product from the marketplace to the field, which most do using electronic systems that track codes on boxes, said Jay Van Rein of the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/10/health/policy/10tomato.html?ref=todayspaper>

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Washington Post

July 11, 2008

Pg. 10

Analysis

Iran's Conflicting Signals To The West

Some Observers Suggest That Missile Tests Show a Readiness to Bargain

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Last week, various Iranian officials made positive comments about a new diplomatic outreach by the United States and its allies, suggesting negotiations on Iran's nuclear program might be possible. This week, Iran test-fired medium-range and long-range missiles, bluntly warning that thousands more were ready to be launched.

The conflicting signals are typical of the opaque Islamic republic, with its many competing power centers and complex system of government. But demonstrating strength before negotiations also is a long-tested diplomatic formula, suggesting the missile launches and harsh rhetoric could be a sign that Iran is suddenly open to bargaining. "The Iranian calculation is they need a show of strength," said Mehrzad Boroujerdi, director of Middle East studies at Syracuse University's Maxwell School. "They are ready for diplomacy and willing to talk, but they are also saying you can't treat us like a weak, third-tier state."

Former Middle East envoy Dennis Ross said the varying messages may reflect "both sides of the Iranian leadership," but they also send a single message: "It makes no sense to attack us -- we can talk and we can also make things really horrible."

There were conflicting reports yesterday on whether Iran had conducted a second round of missile tests earlier in the day, following an initial set on Wednesday. Farsnews, a news agency with ties to the state, reported that several ground-to-air missiles, as well as a torpedo that "is the fastest in the world" had been test-fired. But Pentagon and intelligence officials said reports of two rounds of tests were incorrect, because eight missiles were fired on the same

day, within hours of one another. Iranian media said nine missiles were launched Wednesday, while other reports said as few as seven or as many as 10 missiles were launched.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini said yesterday that the exercise was "a natural reaction against maneuvers and serial threats of the Zionist regime," an apparent reference to Israel's military exercises last month. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking from the Republic of Georgia, said that "we are also sending a message to Iran. We will defend American interests and the interests of our allies."

Nevertheless, after years of stalemate, the timing may be right for Tehran to begin negotiations on its nuclear program. Bouyed by record-high oil prices, Iran has been able to withstand sanctions imposed by the U.N. Security Council for Tehran's unwillingness to suspend uranium enrichment. But the sanctions are beginning to have an impact. The European Union imposed sanctions last month on Iran's largest bank, while French energy giant Total SA yesterday pulled out of talks to develop a liquefied natural gas project in Iran, saying it was too risky to invest there.

In a sign of internal tensions, the foreign policy adviser to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned in a newspaper interview last week against "provocative" statements on the nuclear impasse -- statements often associated with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Without mentioning the president by name, Ali Akbar Velayati said officials should avoid "illogical declarations and slogans" that undermine relations with the world.

Meanwhile, the group of six nations seeking to negotiate with Iran -- the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China -- have sweetened the terms of their offer to broaden economic and political ties if Iran halts its nuclear program. While little attention was paid to Iran's security needs in the original offer two years ago, the new one spoke of respecting "territorial integrity" and encouraging "direct contact and dialogue" with Iran -- and said the nations were committed to "support Iran in playing an important and constructive role in international affairs." Thomas Fingar, head of the National Intelligence Council, said Wednesday at the Center for National Policy that Iran "has reason to feel insecure" because it "lives in a tough neighborhood." He added that "recognizing that Iran has real security needs is a useful starting point. . . . We are part of the reason why Iran feels insecure, rightly or wrongly."

The countries have even pulled back slightly from their demand that Iran suspend uranium enrichment ahead of negotiations. They have offered a "freeze for freeze," meaning that discussions could begin as long as the allies halt efforts to increase sanctions and Iran does not expand its nuclear program. The talks would initially last six weeks, though formal negotiations still could not begin until Iran suspends enrichment, as demanded in Security Council resolutions. Undersecretary of State William J. Burns described the concept Wednesday as "a step that's designed to get to negotiations."

Last weekend, Iran gave a formal response to the offer that U.S. and European officials described as oblique. European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana hopes to meet with Iranian officials next week to seek greater clarity.

Correspondent Thomas Erdbrink in Ramsar, Iran, and staff writers Ann Scott Tyson and Joby Warrick in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/10/AR2008071000024.html>

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Boston Globe
July 11, 2008

Polish Leader Says Missile Defense Offer Held Big Costs

By Associated Press

WARSAW -- Poland's defense minister said yesterday that the latest US offer aimed at persuading his country to accept a missile defense base on its soil contained more costs than benefits for Warsaw.

But the minister, Bogdan Klich, said he still believed a deal could be reached by the end of July, and urged Washington to present an offer that would do more to protect Poland, a former Soviet satellite.

He said suggestions that the United States might turn to Lithuania as an alternative location were unrealistic.

The latest American proposal, which the government rejected yesterday, "does not strengthen our national security," Klich told reporters. "The costs - political, strategic and military - outweigh the benefits."

"We want the benefits to outweigh the costs," he added.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk has rejected the latest US offer aimed at placing 10 missile interceptors in Poland as "unsatisfactory" and said Poland wants US assurances of short- and medium-range antimissile systems, including a Patriot missile battery, to shore up its own defenses.

US officials say the planned defensive umbrella over Eastern Europe would help protect the United States and Europe from potential Iranian attack. But Poland's government is concerned about possible threats from Russia, which is vehemently opposed to seeing the US installations so close to its borders.

The United States and the Czech Republic on Tuesday signed the initial agreement to place a radar-tracking base near Prague, another part of the system.

Russia promptly threatened a military response against the base, raising concerns in the Czech Republic.

The Czech Defense Ministry said it told Lieutenant General Yevgeny Buzhinsky, a top Russian general and Defense Ministry official visiting the republic on Thursday, that it was concerned by Moscow's "inappropriate rhetoric" regarding the proposed base.

http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/articles/2008/07/11/polish_leader_says_missile_defense_offer_held_big_costs/

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Washington Times

July 13, 2008

Pg. 6

Test Exhibits No Long-Range Rocket

By Pamela Hess, Associated Press

Iran's missile test last week did not demonstrate any new capabilities, said a U.S. official familiar with the intelligence, and the test may not have included one of the longer-range missiles Iran claims was among those launched.

Iranian officials said the tests Wednesday and Thursday demonstrated a new variant of the Shahab missile that had a range of 1,250 miles. Such a missile would put Iran in striking distance of much of the Middle East, including Israel - as close as 650 miles from Iran - as well as Turkey, Pakistan and the Arabian Peninsula.

U.S. officials immediately criticized the tests. In Eastern Europe during the launches, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the missile tests underscored the need for a U.S. missile shield in the region.

An independent national security blog, ArmsControlWonk .com, Thursday analyzed video footage of the launch posted by the Iranian government. It determined that the missiles were identical to a version of the Shahab missile first demonstrated in Iran in 1998 that has a known range of 746 miles.

In a post called "Same old Boring Shahab 3," it compared the diameter of the missile with its length and found it to be identical to the 1998 version.

Unless the Iranians built a larger missile with the same length-to-width ratio, dramatically improved the thrust of the rocket or decreased its internal structural mass, the missile could not achieve the range Iran claimed it did.

Otherwise, it is the same knockoff of North Korea's Nodong-1, according to the blog.

Iran falsely claimed in February that it launched a two-stage missile that later analysis determined to be a one-stage Shahab missile, according to the Union of Concerned Scientists, a Washington-based arms control advocacy think tank.

"Iran frequently exaggerates the capability of its missiles, and it appears it is continuing that tradition with [last] week's tests," said David Wright, co-director of the Union's Global Security Program.

The U.S. official familiar with the intelligence said the Iranian tests involved eight or nine missiles, most fired on Wednesday and one more several hours later early Thursday. The mix of missiles ranged from medium-range to close-range battlefield rockets. The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss preliminary analysis, said U.S. intelligence had not decisively determined the exact models.

Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said the test was being taken seriously and was an attempt to destabilize the region.

"We don't believe this exercise to have been an illusion," he said Friday. Still, he added, "They were not testing new technologies or capabilities, but rather firing off old equipment in an attempt to intimidate their neighbors and escalate tension in the region. That is not the way to win the trust and confidence of the international community."

Associated Press writer Lolita C. Baldor contributed to this story.

<http://www.washtimes.com/news/2008/jul/13/test-exhibits-no-long-range-rocket/>

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Washington Post

July 13, 2008

Pg. 12

Accord In North Korea Talks

Nations Approve Nuclear Inspections but Still Lack Timetable

By Edward Cody, Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, July 12 -- Diplomats from six nations agreed in principle Saturday to set up an intrusive inspection program to verify that North Korea has dismantled its plutonium-based program to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.

After three days of talks in Beijing, however, the negotiators were unable to complete a detailed inspection schedule and decided to refer specific issues back to their capitals in hopes of working out an itemized inspection regime in September, according to the chief U.S. negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill.

"All this kind of stuff requires a lot of scrutiny," Hill said.

The limited progress -- agreement in principle but still bogged down in details -- was typical of the tortuous path followed during the past five years of Chinese-sponsored six-party negotiations designed to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It left in suspension such key questions as when North Korea will, as it has pledged several times, reveal whether it has any completed nuclear weapons and where they are stored.

The slow pace increased the probability that the Bush administration will come to an end before resolution of one of its main foreign policy goals, ridding North Asia of the threat of nuclear weapons under the command of Kim Jong Il, the unpredictable North Korean leader.

In addition, North Korea has yet to respond in detail to U.S. questions about whether it was seeking to produce material for nuclear weapons through a separate program based on highly enriched uranium and whether it cooperated with Syria in a nuclear development project that Israeli warplanes destroyed in September.

For the moment, China announced in a statement, North Korea has agreed to finish by October dismantling its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, the facility near Pyongyang where the plutonium-based program was carried out. Wu Dawei, a vice foreign minister who headed China's delegation to the talks, said the North Korean government also agreed that inspections to verify the dismantlement will include visits by experts, perusal of official documents and interviews with key scientists.

The other parties to the negotiations -- which include Japan and Russia in addition to China, the United States and the two Koreas -- agreed to make sure that promised fuel deliveries, amounting to the equivalent of 1 million tons, arrive in North Korean ports before the same deadline, he said.

The United States and Russia agreed to shoulder the main financial burden of providing the heavy fuel oil required by North Korea, the Chinese statement said. China and South Korea said they would combine for other kinds of economic aid, including equipment for the country's rickety electricity grid and transportation system, it added. Despite its wealth, Japan has refused to provide aid until it receives an acceptable accounting of Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korean intelligence in the 1970s and 1980s to train North Korean spies.

North Korea has said it refuses to move forward on revealing the full extent of its nuclear program, as promised in February 2007, until the fuel and other economic aid it was promised has been delivered. So far, only about 40 percent has been provided, the North Korean government said.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/12/AR2008071200454.html>

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(Editor's Note: Hyperlink for referenced report follows article.)

Yahoo! News

Report: Gov't tardy securing radioactive material

By EILEEN SULLIVAN, Associated Press Writer

Tue Jul 15, 1:40 AM ET

WASHINGTON - The government is taking too long to secure radioactive materials across the country that could get into terrorists' hands, according to a government report.

Radioactive material used for legitimate purposes in medical equipment and food, for instance, could be used to create an explosive device known as a dirty bomb. Experts believe such an attack would be contained to a small area but could have significant psychological impact and have serious economic consequences because of cleanup problems.

The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks prompted the government to do a better job of securing nuclear and radiological materials. And nearly seven years later, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission says these materials are much more secure. But congressional investigators say it's not enough.

According to a Government Accountability Office report released Monday, new requirements to ensure that a person purchasing or carrying radioactive materials has a reason to do so is more than three years behind schedule.

In a probe last year that set up a bogus company, investigators said they were able to obtain a license from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that allowed them to buy enough radioactive material for a small dirty bomb. Officials hope the licensing requirements will prevent this from happening again.

NRC spokesman Neil Sheehan said a pilot program was completed in May, and the commission expects final guidance next month.

Further, a system to track radioactive materials as they are transported across the country has also faced multiple delays. The NRC says the system should be in place at the end of this year, but it will not be a real-time tracking system, such as used by some package delivery services.

The system will report transfers within one business day, Sheehan said. And if material goes missing as it's transported, an alarm system will notify officials, he said.

On the inspection side, government investigators found that most Customs and Border Protection officers across the country were never told of 2006 radioactive material reporting requirements by the agency's Washington headquarters. In May 2006, Customs and Border Protection changed its policy to require that officers contact authorities if they detect "more than incidental" amounts of radiation. But this was never communicated to officials in the field.

The GAO also found that there is not enough personal radiation detection equipment for Customs officials at land borders. In 2003, 8,000 out of 18,000 officers and agents had personal radiation detection devices. Currently only about half of the agency's agents and officers have the equipment because of budget constraints, agency spokesman Lloyd Easterling said.

Getting these materials secured has been a longtime goal of Minnesota Republican Sen. Norm Coleman. Coleman says he's happy there's been some progress, but it's taking too long, and it's not enough.

"I'm still not convinced they fully grasp the psychological and economic impact that even a small dirty bomb attack would have on the American public," Coleman said of the NRC.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20080715/ap_on_go_co/dirty_bomb_materials;_ylt=Avwg1vGAJg1iZtEXkFyumBc8Kb1F

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Nuclear Security: NRC and DHS Need to Take Additional Steps to Better Track and Detect Radioactive Materials.

GAO-08-598, June 19.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-08-598>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d08598high.pdf>

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Washington Post

July 16, 2008

Pg. 15

Costly Weapon-Detection Plans Are In Disarray, Investigators Say

By Spencer S. Hsu, Washington Post Staff Writer

Bush administration initiatives to defend the nation against a smuggled nuclear bomb or a biological outbreak or attack remain poorly coordinated, costing billions of tax dollars while basic goals and policies remain incomplete, according to new reports by congressional investigators.

The administration budgeted \$2.8 billion in 2007 for nuclear detection but lacks a strategic plan to plug gaps and move beyond its initial goals, such as placing radiation detectors at domestic and overseas ports, according to reports by the Congressional Research Service and the Government Accountability Office for a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing that will be held today.

Separately, a five-year-old program to detect the airborne release of biological warfare agents such as anthrax, plague and smallpox in more than 30 major U.S. cities still lacks basic technical data to help medical officials determine how to respond to an alert triggered by the sensors, congressional investigators and state and local officials will report to the House Homeland Security Committee.

In written testimony submitted for a House hearing today, state and local public health laboratory directors were highly critical of the program known as BioWatch, saying it is underfunded, improperly managed and of unclear benefit, despite \$400 million in federal spending.

"The BioWatch program has been variously described by my fellow state and local laboratory directors as a parasite to the public health laboratory and squatters in valuable public health laboratory space," said the prepared testimony of Frances Pouch Downes, a Michigan state health official and president of the Association of Public Health Laboratories. "I am hard-pressed to disagree."

DHS spokesman Russ Knocke said that BioWatch guidelines were provided for jurisdictions to create their own operating rules and that the program has paid for its own staff, equipment and materials. A different GAO report recently quoted Energy Department officials praising the DHS for helping shift their focus to detecting nuclear materials overseas away from ports, he added, providing "a more balanced defense of our homeland."

"These criticisms simply don't bear truth," Knocke said.

Democrats are using the Senate and House hearings to air dissatisfaction with the White House's domestic response to the threat from weapons of mass destruction, which was a focus of President Bush in the run-up to the Iraq war in 2003, his 2004 reelection fight and several presidential security directives. As Bush prepares to leave office in January, critics say that despite progress, his administration's actions have not fulfilled its rhetoric.

For example, according to the CRS and the GAO -- Congress's research and audit arms -- a Department of Homeland Security agency established in April 2005 to develop a global nuclear detection structure across 74 federal programs has identified gaps in its initial strategy focused on cargo screening at land and sea ports.

The DHS Domestic Nuclear Detection Office has begun pilot efforts to address those holes -- specifically the threat posed by smuggling a weapon or nuclear materials aboard small boats or private aircraft across the border between official entrances -- but "it has not yet developed an overarching strategic plan to guide its transition" to a more comprehensive strategy, according to testimony submitted by GAO official David C. Maurer and released by the Senate panel, chaired by Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.).

In a statement, Lieberman said the DNDO's system is incomplete, may have gaps or redundancies, and has no clear measure for success. "DHS must develop a reliable means to assure the American people that major investments in this architecture will in fact make us measurably safer against catastrophic nuclear terrorism," he said.

The House panel, chaired by Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-Miss.), said that the new National Biosurveillance Integration Center will not be fully operational by September, a deadline set by Congress last year. While the center is supposed to fuse data from medical clinicians, intelligence sources and BioWatch sensors, DHS has reached coordinating agreements with only about half of 11 key federal agencies, such as the Pentagon, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/15/AR2008071502874.html>

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Moscow Times

July 16, 2008

U.S.-Armenia Pact

WASHINGTON -- The United States and Armenia have agreed to cooperate against the smuggling of nuclear and radioactive materials.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian signed the agreement in what is called a "joint action plan" that makes the cooperation activities official.

The document was signed Monday at the State Department and establishes a 28-step program to increase Armenia's abilities to prevent, detect and respond to attempts at smuggling dangerous nuclear materials.

-- AP

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/article/1010/42/368970.htm>

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Washington Post

July 16, 2008

Pg. 11

U.S. To Give Czechs Ballistic Missile Defense

Provision Is Part of Agreement Allowing American Radar Site in the Republic

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

U.S. Navy ships in the Mediterranean will provide ballistic missile defense to the Czech Republic under a commitment contained in the agreement to place a U.S. radar site in that country, according to State and Defense Department officials.

The United States "is committed to the security of the Czech Republic and to protect and defend, by means of its ballistic missile defense system, the Czech Republic against a potential ballistic missile attack," according to the agreement signed July 8, the text of which was released by the Czech government.

In remarks at the signing ceremony in Prague, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the Czech-based U.S. radar facility will "help protect" the Czech Republic when linked to an Aegis system, a sea-based antimissile system that combines radar and interceptors and is carried aboard a variety of U.S. Navy ships. Rice did not say at the time that the United States had committed to providing that defense.

Yesterday, a Pentagon spokesman said that an additional U.S. system being developed to be based in Europe, the Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), will also be available to protect the Czechs from missiles launched from Iran or any Middle Eastern country. Eventually, the intention is to link the Czech radar into a NATO missile defense system that is in the planning stage.

The radar was originally justified as a means for targeting in midcourse flight any long-range Iranian missile aimed at the U.S. mainland or American forces based in Europe.

Under another element in the agreement, the United States also said it will work together with the government in Prague to meet any threats to the Czech Republic related to the radar site "should they arise." The accord also allows for joint research and development on missile defense, a program that Rice said she would discuss further with Czech parliamentarians who must ratify the agreement. The Bush administration has said there is no plan to seek U.S. Senate approval for the agreement.

The United States also agreed to help prevent disclosure of any "controlled unclassified information" (CUI) related to the radar site if the Czech Republic does not want it released. While such information can be disclosed under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, the agreement says that "each Party shall take all lawful steps, which may include national classification, to keep controlled unclassified information free from further disclosure (including requests under any applicable domestic legislation) . . . unless the originating Party consents to such disclosure."

Steven Aftergood, of the Federation of American Scientists, who first disclosed the text of the agreement on his Secrecy News, said, "The new agreement surprisingly presents national security classification as an option when facing involuntary disclosure of CUI under the Freedom of Information Act."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/15/AR2008071502663.html>

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Washington Times

WH to send envoy to Iran meeting

Nicholas Kralev

Wednesday, July 16, 2008

The Bush administration plans to send an envoy to talks with Iran's chief nuclear negotiator in Geneva this weekend in what would be the highest-level U.S.-Iranian meeting in nearly three decades, officials said late Tuesday.

William J. Burns, undersecretary of state for political affairs and the administration's point man on Iran, will accompany European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana with Saeed Jalili in discussions aimed at persuading Tehran to stop enriching uranium.

U.S. officials insisted that Mr. Burns will not negotiate with Mr. Jalili but only listen to what the Iranian has to say. He will "reiterate that our terms for negotiations remain the same: Iran must suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activities," one official was quoted as saying by the Associated Press.

Still, the meeting represents a remarkable shift for President Bush, who called Iran part of an "axis of evil" six years ago and has refused to engage with Tehran. More significantly, the Saturday meeting will take place before a suspension has occurred.

Two years ago, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice offered to meet with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, but only if Tehran stops enrichment.

Mr. Mottaki told the United States and five other powers this month that Iran would not engage in "condescending" talks because Middle East developments in recent years have strengthened its position to negotiate on its own terms. The Iranian response to a refreshed package of incentives in exchange for an enrichment suspension came in a letter that was sent on July 4 and leaked to a French newspaper Tuesday.

"The world has changed," Mr. Mottaki wrote in an apparent reference to the Iraq war and other regional developments that are perceived to have diminished U.S. influence. "Nobody can regard himself above the law or the sole enforcer of the law."

In his letter, a copy of which was posted on the Web site of the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, the foreign minister added: "The time for negotiating from the condescending position of inequality has come to an end."

Last month's package, which included political, security and economic incentives, came two years after Iran rejected a similar deal offered by the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China.

We have no intention of changing this path," Mr. Mottaki wrote in his letter. "The people of Iran have worked out plans for the advancement of their country, without asking for help from others."

Democratic presidential hopeful Sen. Barack Obama, meanwhile, called on Tehran on Tuesday to start negotiating with the West now, before the terms get tougher next year should he win the White House.

Mr. Obama, who has been criticized for planning to hold direct talks with Iranian officials without preconditions, sought to appear tough on the Islamic Republic in what was touted as a major foreign policy speech.

"The Iranians should negotiate now. By waiting, they will only face mounting pressure," he said. "Preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons is a vital national security interest of the United States. No tool of statecraft should be taken off the table."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Tuesday that the next U.S. administration has "no other option" but to begin talks with Tehran.

"Tehran welcomes negotiations but will not accept the precondition set by the West — the suspension of uranium enrichment," he was quoted as saying in a television interview.

The U.N. Security Council has adopted three rounds of economic sanctions against Iran because of its refusal to suspend enrichment, which it insists is for peaceful purposes. But the West says the enrichment is meant to be used for a nuclear weapon.

The Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee will consider legislation this week that would expand U.S. sanctions against Iran, the panel's top members said Tuesday. It comes just days after Tehran test-fired missiles it said could reach U.S. assets in the region.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/jul/16/white-house-sends-envoy-to-iran-meeting/>

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