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Washington Times
February 28, 2007
Pg. 4

McConnell Fears Iran Nukes By 2015

Senate warned of dangers to U.S., Israel

By Bill Gertz, Washington Times

Iran's development of nuclear arms is "very dangerous," and Tehran could deploy the weapons within the next several years, the nation's most senior intelligence official told the Senate yesterday.

"We assess that Tehran seeks to develop nuclear weapons and has shown greater interest in drawing out the negotiations rather than reaching an acceptable diplomatic solution," said retired Vice Adm. Michael McConnell, the new director of national intelligence.

"This is a very dangerous situation, as a nuclear Iran could prompt destabilizing countermoves by other states in this volatile region," he told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Iran could have the capability to build nuclear weapons by 2015 and about the same time will be able to mount a nuclear warhead on a missile, Mr. McConnell said in response to a question from Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York Democrat.

Asked whether Iran would use a nuclear weapon against Israel, Mr. McConnell said: "They've stated that they would consider that, that Israel shouldn't exist, should be wiped off the map. I don't know that I would conclude that they would use it in a prescribed period of time, but that risk would be there."

Mr. McConnell said Iran poses a threat to the United States beyond its nuclear weapons program and is seeking to project military power "with the goal of dominating the Gulf region." Iran is working to disrupt U.S. military operations and the reinforcement of U.S. forces in the region, "thereby raising the political, financial and human cost of our presence," he said.
"To this end, Tehran views its mounting inventory of ballistic missiles as an integral part of its strategy to deter and, if necessary, retaliate against forces in the region, to include United States forces," Mr. McConnell said.
Tehran's power projection capabilities include "terrorist operations" that are aimed at regime preservation, deterring U.S. or Israeli attacks and driving the United States out of the Middle East, he said.
The Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah is a key element of Iran's strategic goals, and the group could carry out attacks against the United States if it or Iran is threatened, Mr. McConnell said.
He also described Iran's role in Iraq, saying the United States has evidence that Iran is training insurgents at sites outside Iraq to use explosively formed penetrators against U.S. troops.
"If Iran is training Iraqi militants in the use of Iranian weapons, which are then being used to kill Americans in Iraq, I think that's a very serious act, and one that we ought to consider taking steps to stop," said Sen. Joe Lieberman, Connecticut independent.
Army Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), was asked during the hearing whether China will pose a threat to the United States because of its weapons buildup.
"China, today, could be a military threat," he said. "They have intercontinental ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads and so on, so it's a matter of they're building their military, in my view, to reach some state of parity with the United States. So, in a threat sense, it becomes intentions. So they're a threat today, they would become an increasing threat over time."
But Tom Fingar, the deputy director of national intelligence for analysis, said China has had nuclear capability for decades and that Beijing "appeared to have decided that we are not an enemy" and wants a peaceful global environment to better address its "very severe social problems."
Gen. Maples also told the Senate panel that North Korea is taking "initial steps" to comply with the Feb. 13 Beijing agreement by allowing international inspections of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. The DIA will be watching "a number of successive steps" that North Korea needs to take under the agreement, Gen. Maples said.
Joseph DeTrani, the mission manager for North Korea in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, disclosed during the hearing that U.S. intelligence agencies have information that Pyongyang acquired "material sufficient for a production-scale capability of enriching uranium" in violation of agreements to denuclearize. It was the first time a senior U.S. intelligence official had discussed the covert North Korean uranium-enrichment program publicly.
"They were confronted with that information in October 2002, and at that time they admitted to having such a program," Mr. DeTrani said. "And immediately thereafter, that's when they pulled out of the [nonproliferation treaty], they asked the [International Atomic Energy Agency] to leave and so forth."
http://www.washtimes.com/national/20070227-112340-4811r.htm

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Washington Times
February 28, 2007
Pg. 1

U.S., N. Korea To Normalize Ties

Work for 'full diplomatic relations'

By Andrew Salmon, Washington Times

SEOUL -- North Korea's top nuclear negotiator was on his way to the United States yesterday for talks on issues that a State Department official said would include the first steps toward the normalization of diplomatic relations.
The trip, which coincides with the first high-level talks between North Korea and South Korea in more than four months, reflects the rapid easing of tensions with President Kim Jong-il's regime since North Korea agreed this month to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for heavy fuel oil and other concessions.
Kim Kye-gwan, North Korea's vice minister of foreign affairs, arrived in Beijing yesterday and was expected in San Francisco tomorrow, a State Department official told The Washington Times. He will continue to New York for talks with his U.S. negotiating counterpart, Christopher Hill, which will likely begin early next week.
At a State Department briefing yesterday, spokesman Sean McCormack said the two would begin a process of normalization described in the nuclear deal concluded with Pyongyang on Feb. 13 in Beijing.
That agreement calls for the two countries to open bilateral talks "aimed at resolving pending bilateral issues and moving toward full diplomatic relations."

Asked yesterday to confirm that diplomatic normalization would be a part of the New York talks, a State Department official said yes. Normal diplomatic relations typically involve an exchange of ambassadors and related courtesies.

The process to be started in New York also calls for the United States to "begin the process of removing the designation of [North Korea] as a state-sponsor of terrorism and advance the process of terminating the application of the Trading With the Enemy Act with respect to [North Korea]."

Before traveling to New York, Mr. Kim is expected to deliver a speech and meet with private organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area. The State Department official was not certain how long he would be there.

Travel by North Korean diplomats at the United Nations normally is restricted to a 25-mile radius of Manhattan, although exceptions have been made with State Department permission.

The United States still maintains it does not talk to North Korea outside the context of the six-party negotiations, which involve China, Russia, South Korea and Japan. But the outlines of the Beijing deal were worked out in advance during three days of one-on-one meetings between Mr. Kim and Mr. Hill in Berlin.

The breakthrough was also preceded by negotiations between North Korea and the U.S. Treasury Department, which in September 2005 successfully pressured a bank in Macao to freeze $24 million of Pyongyang's overseas holdings.

"Changes are being made to lift the sanctions in the Office of Foreign Assets Control," a source familiar with the U.S. financial community told The Washington Times yesterday. The Office of Foreign Assets Control is tasked with tracking the assets of the United States' enemies.

"Officials there are saying, 'If you look at our documents, North Korea, Iran and Cuba were the enemies of the United States,' " the source said. " 'Going forward, we are looking at Iran and Cuba.' "

A South Korean delegation led by Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung, meanwhile, arrived in Pyongyang for what was expected to be four days of talks. It was the first such meeting since North Korea conducted a nuclear weapons test in October.

The talks were expected to deal with the implementation of the Feb. 13 accord as well as a resumption of South Korean aid and other North-South economic projects.

The delegates could also discuss South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun's call this month for a peace treaty to replace the armistice that halted fighting in the Korean War in 1953.

"The meeting is to create the future of the Korean people and the hope of the Korean Peninsula," Mr. Lee said before leaving Seoul. "We will also focus on normalizing the framework of inter-Korean dialogue and discuss ways of establishing a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula."

In the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, the group was welcomed by Prime Minister Pak Pong-ju and treated to a gala dinner at the flagship Yanggakdo Hotel.

"Now is the time for the two Koreas to step on a springboard planted on firmer ground," Mr. Pak said, according to pool reports.

Nicholas Kralev in Washington contributed to this report.

http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070227-100433-9295r.htm

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Miami Herald
Posted on Wed, Feb. 28, 2007
CUBA

Ex-insider: Cuba has bioweapons

A former top Cuban military official said Cuba is manufacturing biological weapons.

BY FRANCES ROBLES
frobles@MiamiHerald.com

The former chief of Cuba's military medical services is calling for international weapons inspections of a secret underground lab near Havana, where he says the government is creating biological warfare agents like the plague, botulism and yellow fever.

Roberto Ortega, a former army colonel who ran the military's medical services from 1984 to 1994, defected in 2003 and now lives in South Florida.

After living here quietly for four years, this week Ortega went on the Spanish-language media circuit to denounce what he claims is an advanced offensive biological warfare weapons program. He spoke Tuesday night at the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies where one angry heckler stormed out accusing him of deliberately sowing fear among Cuban exiles.

"They can develop viruses and bacteria and dangerous sicknesses that are currently unknown and difficult to diagnose," Ortega told The Miami Herald. ``They don't need missiles or troops. They need four agents, like the people from al Qaeda or the Taliban, who contaminate water, air conditioning or heating systems."
He said Cuba was ready to use the biological agents "to blackmail the United States in case of an international incident" such as the threat of a U.S. invasion.
The Cuban government has denied such programs exist, but if Ortega's allegations are true Washington could face the prospect of an enemy nation 90 miles away with the capability of launching germ attacks.

UNDERGROUND LAB

Ortega said he told the CIA nearly two years ago about an underground Cuban facility southwest of Havana. The maximum security lab dubbed "Labor One" has an above-ground civilian cover and employs dozens of scientists, he said.
But in the underground facility, scientists reproduced and stockpiled deadly germs and bacterias collected in Africa, he added.
He visited the lab in 1992 when he accompanied a high-level Russian military delegation, he said.
"I saw it," Ortega said. ``I lived it."
Ortega is believed to be the first defector with details of such an alleged biological warfare facility, said University of Miami professor Manuel Cereijo, who studies Cuba's biotechnology and terrorism issues.
Ortega said he has come forward now because he did not see the CIA taking public action on his information. The CIA and the U.S. State Department declined to comment.
"He talks about a place I never heard about," Cereijo said. ``There are many other places where there exists the capacity to develop bioweapons. That doesn't mean they are doing that. Only a person like him would know."

ADVANCES KNOWN

Cuba's advanced biotechnology industry is well-known, having produced vaccines for hepatitis and meningitis B and exported them to dozens of countries around the world. In 2002, John Bolton, then a top U.S. State Department official for arms control, said Cuba ``has at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort."
In a report last year, the State Department acknowledged analysts were divided on the issue of whether Cuba has such a program. Experts also argue that the U.S. government is unlikely to have high-level spies in Cuba feeding it information on what must be, if it exists, a highly secret program.
Ken Alibek, former deputy director of the Soviet Union's bioweapons program, said Russian scientists always suspected the Cubans were developing a biological warfare program, but said he doubts that any Soviet military delegation would have been invited to visit it.
"If you ask whether the Cubans are capable, I'd say easily," he told The Miami Herald in a telephone interview from Virginia. ``Are they doing it? I can tell you when I was involved in the late 80s, we suspected so."
http://www.miamiherald.com/581/story/26337.html

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

New York Times
March 1, 2007

U.S. Had Doubts on North Korean Uranium Drive

By David E. Sanger and William J. Broad
WASHINGTON, Feb. 28 — Last October, the North Koreans tested their first nuclear device, the fruition of decades of work to make a weapon out of plutonium.
For nearly five years, though, the Bush administration, based on intelligence estimates, has accused North Korea of also pursuing a secret, parallel path to a bomb, using enriched uranium. That accusation, first leveled in the fall of 2002, resulted in the rupture of an already tense relationship: The United States cut off oil supplies, and the North Koreans responded by throwing out international inspectors, building up their plutonium arsenal and, ultimately, producing that first plutonium bomb.
But now, American intelligence officials are publicly softening their position, admitting to doubts about how much progress the uranium enrichment program has actually made. The result has been new questions about the Bush administration’s decision to confront North Korea in 2002.
“The question now is whether we would be in the position of having to get the North Koreans to give up a sizable arsenal if this had been handled differently,” a senior administration official said this week.
The disclosure underscores broader questions about the ability of intelligence agencies to discern the precise status of foreign weapons programs. The original assessment about North Korea came during the same period that the administration was building its case about Iraq’s unconventional weapons programs, which turned out to be based

on flawed intelligence. And the new North Korea assessment comes amid debate over intelligence about Iran's weapons.

The public revelation of the intelligence agencies' doubts, which have been brewing for some time, came almost by happenstance. In a little-noticed exchange on Tuesday at a hearing at the Senate Armed Services Committee, Joseph DeTrani, a longtime intelligence official, told Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island that "we still have confidence that the program is in existence — at the mid-confidence level." Under the intelligence agencies' own definitions, that level "means the information is interpreted in various ways, we have alternative views" or it is not fully corroborated.

"The administration appears to have made a very costly decision that has resulted in a fourfold increase in the nuclear weapons of North Korea," Senator Reed said in an interview on Wednesday. "If that was based in part on mixing up North Korea's ambitions with their accomplishments, it's important."

Two administration officials, who declined to be identified, suggested that if the administration harbored the same doubts in 2002 that it harbored now, the negotiating strategy for dealing with North Korea might have been different — and the tit-for-tat actions that led to October's nuclear test could, conceivably, have been avoided.

The strongest evidence for the original assessment was Pakistan's sale to North Korea of upwards of 20 centrifuges, machines that spin fast to convert uranium gas into highly enriched uranium, a main fuel for atom bombs. Officials feared that the North Koreans would use those centrifuges as models to build a vast enrichment complex. But in interviews this week, experts inside and outside the government said that since then, little or no evidence of Korean procurements had emerged to back up those fears.

The continuing doubts prompted the Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Wednesday to declassify a portion of the most recent, one-page update circulated to top national security officials about the status of North Korea's uranium program. The assessment, read by two senior intelligence officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity in a joint interview, said the intelligence community still had "high confidence that North Korea has pursued a uranium enrichment capability, which we assess is for a weapon."

It added, they said, that all the government's intelligence agencies "judge — most with moderate confidence — that this effort continues. The degree of progress towards producing enriched uranium remains unknown, however."

In other words, while the agencies were certain of the initial purchases, confidence in the program's overall existence appears to have dropped over the years — apparently from high to moderate.

It is unclear why the new assessment is being disclosed now. But some officials suggested that the timing could be linked to North Korea's recent agreement to reopen its doors to international arms inspectors. As a result, these officials have said, the intelligence agencies are facing the possibility that their assessments will once again be compared to what is actually found on the ground. "This may be preventative," one American diplomat said.

American intelligence agencies had long known of North Korea's nuclear program employing plutonium, which can make compact weapons but requires large, easily detected reactors. By contrast, uranium warheads tend to be larger, but the technology for enriching uranium is much smaller and easier to hide.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and the national security adviser, Stephen J. Hadley, declined to discuss the decisions to confront North Korea in 2002 or the quality of the intelligence behind that decision, though both have noted previously that North Korea purchased equipment from Pakistan that could only have been intended for use in producing weapons fuel. One former official said that it was Ms. Rice, in a meeting at the C.I.A. in 2004, who encouraged intelligence officials to soften their assessments of how quickly the North Koreans could produce weapons-usable uranium.

"She asked, how did we know about the timing, and they didn't have answers," said the former official. "Did they have Russians and Chinese helping them? No one was sure. It was really a guesstimate about timing."

Different players in the 2002 debate have different memories. John R. Bolton, the former American ambassador to the United Nations, who headed the State Department's proliferation office at the time of the 2002 declaration, said in an interview on Wednesday evening that "there was no dissent at the time, because in the face of the evidence the disputes evaporated." Mr. Bolton, one of the most hawkish voices in the administration and a vocal critic of its recent deal with North Korea, recalled that even the State Department's own intelligence arm, which was the most skeptical of the Iraq evidence, "agreed with the consensus opinion."

But David A. Kay, a nuclear expert and former official who in 2003 and 2004 led the American hunt for unconventional arms in Iraq, said he had found the administration's claims about the North Korean uranium program unpersuasive. "They were driving it way further than the evidence indicated it should go," he said in an interview. The leap of logic, Dr. Kay added, turned evidence of equipment purchases into "a significant production capability."

But the doubts were on full display on Wednesday, when Christopher R. Hill, the chief American negotiator with North Korea, testified on Capitol Hill. "If we determine that there is a program, it's got to go," Mr. Hill said, words that were far more tentative than American policy makers have used about the program in the past. Expressing his

resolve to get to the bottom of the mystery, he added: “We cannot have a situation where we — you know, they pretend to disarm and we pretend to believe them. We need to run this into the ground.” He said that while there was no doubt that North Korea had bought centrifuges from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the rogue Pakistani engineer, there was doubt about “how far they’ve gotten.”

John E. McLaughlin, a former director of central intelligence and the deputy C.I.A. director in 2002, defended the initial North Korean findings as accurate. “At the time we reported this, we had confidence that they were acquiring materials that could give them the capability to do this down the road,” he said in an interview. But no one, he added, “said they had anything up and running. We also made clear that we did not have a confident understanding of how far along they were.”

That confidence has dropped further because inspectors have been banned from North Korea for four years, nearly as long as they were out of Iraq before their readmittance just before the 2003 invasion. In Iraq’s case, intelligence analysts extrapolated from the last information they had to assess what kind of weapons Iraq might be producing. Outside experts, including David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington that tracks nuclear arms, have suggested in recent days that something similar happened in North Korea’s case. “The evidence doesn’t support the extrapolation” to the judgment that North Korea was making crucial strides in its uranium program, Mr. Albright said in an interview. “The extrapolation went too far.”

He said administration analysts were right in thinking that Dr. Khan had sold North Korea about 20 centrifuges. Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the Pakistani president, confirmed that in a memoir published last year. But, Mr. Albright said, intelligence agencies overstated whether North Korea had used those few machines as models to construct row upon row of carbon copies.

His report zeroed in on thousands of aluminum tubes that the North Koreans bought and tried to buy in the early 2000s. The C.I.A. and the Bush administration, the report said, pointed to these tubes as the “smoking gun” for construction of a large-scale North Korean plant for the enriching of uranium. It was assessments about the purpose of aluminum tubes that were at the center of the flawed Iraq intelligence.

In the North Korea case, intelligence analysts saw the tubes as ideal for centrifuges. But Mr. Albright said the relatively weak aluminum tubes were suitable only for stationary outer casings — not central rotors, which have to be very strong to keep from flying apart while spinning at tremendous speeds.

Moreover, he added, the aluminum tubes were “very easy to get and not controlled” by global export authorities because of their potentially harmless nature. So that purchase, by itself, Mr. Albright added, was “not an indicator” of clandestine use for nuclear arms.

David E. Sanger reported from Washington, and William J. Broad from New York.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/01/washington/01korea.html

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Washington Post
March 1, 2007
Pg. 1

New Doubts On Nuclear Efforts By North Korea

U.S. Less Certain of Uranium Program

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration is backing away from its long-held assertions that North Korea has an active clandestine program to enrich uranium, leading some experts to believe that the original U.S. intelligence that started the crisis over Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions may have been flawed.

The chief intelligence officer for North Korea, Joseph R. DeTrani, told Congress on Tuesday that while there is "high confidence" North Korea acquired materials that could be used in a "production-scale" uranium program, there is only "mid-confidence" such a program exists. Meanwhile, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill, the chief negotiator for disarmament talks, told a conference last week in Washington that it is unclear whether North Korea ever mastered the production techniques necessary for such a program.

If the materials North Korea bought "did not go into a highly enriched uranium program, maybe they went somewhere else," Hill said. "Fine. We can have a discussion about where they are and where they've gone."

The administration's stance today stands in sharp contrast to the certainty expressed by top officials in 2002, when the administration accused Pyongyang of running a secret uranium program -- and demanded it be dismantled at once. President Bush told a news conference that November: "We discovered that, contrary to an agreement they had with the United States, they're enriching uranium, with a desire of developing a weapon."

The accusation about the alleged uranium program backfired, sparking a series of events that ultimately led to North Korea's first nuclear test -- using another material, plutonium -- nearly five months ago.

In 2002, the United States led a drive to suspend shipments of fuel oil promised to Pyongyang under a 1994 accord that froze a North Korean plutonium facility. The collapse of the 1994 agreement freed North Korea to build up a stockpile of plutonium for as many as a dozen nuclear weapons. Pyongyang conducted its test with some of that plutonium -- while the alleged uranium facility faded in importance.

Plutonium and highly enriched uranium provide different routes to building nuclear weapons. The North Koreans were able to reprocess spent fuel rods -- which had been monitored by U.N. inspectors under the 1994 agreement -- to obtain the weapons-grade plutonium for a nuclear test last year. A uranium-enrichment program would have required Pyongyang to build a facility with thousands of uranium-spinning centrifuges to obtain the highly enriched uranium needed for a weapon. Iran's nuclear program, which the United States alleges is intended for weapons, involves enriched uranium.

When Bush took office in 2001, a number of top administration officials openly expressed grave doubts about the 1994 accord, which was negotiated by the Clinton administration, and they seized on the intelligence about the uranium facility to terminate the agreement. The CIA provided an unclassified estimate to Congress in November 2002 that North Korea had begun constructing a plant that would produce enough "weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year . . . as soon as mid-decade."

David Albright, a respected former U.N. inspector and president of the Institute for Science and International Security, issued a report last week in which he likened the intelligence on North Korea's uranium facility to the discredited intelligence before the invasion of Iraq that Baghdad was building a nuclear program. "The analysis about North Korea's program also appears to be flawed," he wrote.

In the upcoming issue of the Washington Quarterly, Joel S. Wit, a former State Department official who, with Albright, recently met with North Korean officials in Pyongyang, also raises questions about the intelligence estimate.

Administration officials insist they had valid suspicions at the time about North Korean purchases -- including 150 tons of aluminum tubes from Russia in June 2002 -- to halt any possible cooperative talks with Pyongyang. Officials also say that a senior North Korean official admitted to the program in October 2002, when Hill's predecessor, James Kelly, confronted North Korean officials over the U.S. intelligence findings at a meeting in Pyongyang. North Korea subsequently denied that any such admission took place.

Kelly told reporters at the time he had informed the North Koreans that "this was a big problem and that they needed to dismantle it right away, before we could fully engage in a whole range of things that might well be mutually beneficial."

U.S. participants at the meeting said in interviews there was little dispute at the time North Korea appeared to be admitting the program, though one said the admission was more "tonal" -- such as the North Korean official's belligerent attitude -- than would appear in the transcript of the discussion.

During the early years of the crisis, the United States took a firm stand that North Korea must first admit to the uranium facility, rejecting proposals from other nations that it was more important to freeze the plutonium facility in order to halt North Korea's production. In May 2004, DeTrani -- then with the State Department -- was dispatched to give the North Koreans a detailed, 90-minute presentation of all the materials that Pyongyang had procured overseas, including aluminum tubes, chemicals and even a centrifuge kit from a Pakistani nuclear smuggling network, a U.S. official said.

The North Koreans have consistently denied having a uranium-enrichment program, and U.S. officials say suspected procurement activities have largely ceased in the past two years for unknown reasons. Some speculate that Pyongyang found a uranium program too difficult, especially since the plutonium facility was active. Others say DeTrani's presentation spooked them and they either ended the purchases or became more discreet.

Hill has said he has raised the uranium program at every meeting with the North Koreans, but the recent deal struck with Pyongyang focuses on the plutonium program. Under the agreement, North Korea will close and "seal" its plutonium nuclear reactor at Yongbyon within 60 days in return for 50,000 tons of fuel oil.

Pyongyang must eventually disclose and dismantle its programs in order to receive significant aid and other benefits, including normalizing relations with the United States.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/28/AR2007022801977.html

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

New York Times
March 1, 2007

U.S. Discusses Releasing North Korean Funds

By Steven R. Weisman and Donald Greenlees

WASHINGTON, Feb. 28 — China and the United States are close to an accord to let North Korea regain some of the $25 million in its funds frozen in a bank in Macao now that it has agreed to start dismantling its nuclear arms program, American officials said Wednesday.

The American officials said arrangements for North Korea to get a portion of the funds frozen at Banco Delta Asia, a small family-owned bank accused of money laundering, have been the subject of intense discussions this week in China. A deal could be announced in the next few weeks, they said.

The issue of the funds, frozen a year and a half ago, was a major factor in the off-again-on-again six-party negotiations with North Korea over its nuclear program. North Korea angrily boycotted the talks for most of the last year, charging that the bank action was based on false charges and was an example of economic coercion.

The intention to ease the freeze on the North Korean funds was not announced at the time of the North Korea accord reached on Feb. 13, but officials said at the time that they expected the issue to be resolved. Daniel Glaser, a deputy under secretary of the Treasury, has been in China this week for discussions about the subject.

Mr. Glaser said this week that the United States had gone through more than 300,000 documents from Banco Delta Asia and consulted on them with both North Korea and China. The effort, American officials said, was meant to determine which of the North Korean funds were tainted by illegal activities and which were legitimate.

“All of this work that we’ve done has put us in a position where we can begin to take steps to resolve the Banco Delta Asia matter,” Mr. Glaser told reporters in Hong Kong on Monday. He said the resolution of the matter would be completed “in a timely fashion” and “as quickly as possible.”

The expected return of some of the frozen funds to North Korea — officials involved in the discussions say the sum could exceed $12 million — offers a striking case study of how the United States has used its financial laws to extend its reach to foreign banks and isolate a country from the international financial system.

Christopher R. Hill, the assistant secretary of state who negotiated the nuclear deal with North Korea, said Wednesday that he had no doubt that freezing the funds compelled North Korea to negotiate.

“I think they were concerned about the fact that we were able to go after an important note of their financing,” he said, testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. Hill added that the agreement on nuclear matters meant no easing of American concerns over North Korea’s illicit activities on drugs, weapons or counterfeiting. “I can assure you that we have not, and will not, trade progress on denuclearization by turning a blind eye to some of these other activities,” he said.

The Bush administration hopes to replicate the North Korean experience with Iran, but American officials involved in the planning acknowledge that this might be more difficult because Iran has a web of banking relationships throughout Europe and the Middle East.

Sanctions against Iran approved by the United Nations Security Council in December have contributed to Iran’s economic isolation, administration officials say. In addition, Treasury steps similar to those against Banco Delta Asia have forced Iranian banks to carry out transactions, including the sale of oil, in currencies other than the dollar. These steps have complicated business deals and the willingness of some foreign companies to invest in Iran, energy experts say. Recently, for example, Russia said it was slowing its investment in an Iranian civilian nuclear plant, saying that it objected to being paid in euros.

Banco Delta Asia was seen in financial circles as an early test case of American efforts to use such sanctions against not only North Korea but also other countries charged with supporting terrorism or illegal weapons proliferation. In 2005, for example, the Bush administration labeled Banco Delta Asia a “primary money laundering concern” and charged that it was helping North Korea carry out counterfeiting, narcotics trafficking and other illicit activities. North Korea denied the accusations, and Banco Delta Asia, in filings with the Treasury Department, said it had no evidence of such activities for North Korea.

Nevertheless, the bank and the Chinese government closed accounts of 20 North Korean banks, 11 North Korean trading companies, 9 North Korean citizens and 8 Macao-based companies that do business with North Korea, according to bank records. The bank also promised to cease any further business with North Korea or its business partners.

American officials have suggested that some of these accounts helped North Korea’s leader, Kim Jong-il, maintain a lavish lifestyle in Pyongyang, the capital.

While the $25 million in Banco Delta Asia is believed to be a small part of North Korea’s financial activities with the outside world, it reflects only the amount of money in the bank at the time the funds were frozen. The volume of transactions conducted by the bank for North Korea could involve many times that amount of money, according to people close to the investigation into the bank.

The main enforcement tool by the United States was an announcement that it was considering a step barring American banks from doing business in dollars with Banco Delta Asia, effectively threatening to shut it out of the international banking system. To protect themselves, American banks then stopped doing business with Banco Delta Asia.

Those steps, in turn, forced the bank to shut itself down, hand itself over to the Chinese government and freeze all funds linked to North Korea.
Steven R. Weisman reported from Washington, and Donald Greenlees from Hong Kong.
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/01/world/asia/01bank.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Washington Post
March 2, 2007
Pg. 10

N. Korea Reasserts Pledge To Denuclearize

By Associated Press
SEOUL, March 1 -- North Korea's No. 2 leader reiterated Thursday his country's pledge to abandon its nuclear weapons, as the impoverished nation sought a resumption of aid in its first high-level talks with South Korea since conducting an atomic test.
Kim Yong Nam said that "the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the dying wish" of the country's founding president, Kim Il Sung, who died in 1994. North Korea "will make efforts to realize it," he told South Korean Unification Minister Lee Jae Joung in Pyongyang, the North's capital.
Lee pressed for North Korea to follow through on its breakthrough Feb. 13 agreement with the United States and four other countries to shut down its sole operating nuclear reactor in 60 days, and to eventually dismantle all its atomic programs.
Kim Yong Nam also called for the two Koreas to work together to reunify the peninsula, which remains officially at war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a cease-fire, not a peace treaty.
South Korea has been one of the North's main aid sources since leaders of the two nations held their first and only summit in 2000. This week marks the 20th cabinet-level talks since then.
The North wants to resume separate discussions this month on economic cooperation that would address aid, but South Korea prefers to wait until after April 14 -- the deadline for the North to switch off its nuclear reactor, South Korean journalists said.
http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/01/AR2007030100199.html

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Los Angeles Times
March 2, 2007

U.S. To Develop New Hydrogen Bomb

Lawrence Livermore may take the lead in an effort by three national labs. Aging warheads would be replaced.
By Ralph Vartabedian, Times Staff Writer
The Energy Department will announce today a contract to develop the nation's first new hydrogen bomb in two decades, involving a collaboration between three national weapons laboratories, The Times has learned.
The new bomb will include design features from all three labs, though Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the Bay Area appears to have taken the lead position in the project. The Los Alamos and Sandia labs in New Mexico will also be part of the project.
Teams of scientists in California and New Mexico have been working since last year to develop the new bomb, using the world's most powerful supercomputers.
The weapon is known as the reliable replacement warhead and is intended to replace aging warheads now deployed on missiles aboard Trident submarines.
The contract decision was made by the Nuclear Weapons Council, which consists of officials from the Defense Department and the National Nuclear Security Administration, part of the Energy Department. Plans were underway Thursday to announce the award this afternoon.
The nuclear administration will issue the contract and run the program.
The cost of the development is secret, though outside experts said it would cost billions of dollars — perhaps tens of billions — to develop the bomb, build factories to restart high-volume weapons production and then assemble the weapons.
If Livermore does become the lead laboratory, confidence in the facility is likely to be bolstered, and political suggestions that its role in weapons development is unnecessary could be quelled.

A lead role by Los Alamos would help extract that facility from deep political problems growing out of security breaches.
The program is not expected to create a surge in employment at any of the labs
The program marks the first time the military has fielded a nuclear weapon design without an underground test. The last time scientists set off a hydrogen bomb was in 1991 under the Nevada desert.
President Clinton ordered a testing moratorium, and it has been continued by President Bush.
Since the reason for building the new bomb is to maintain confidence in the nation's nuclear deterrent, experts say, the Nuclear Weapons Council will want the most conservative design, which gives Livermore the upper hand.
The design details are secret, but Livermore's version utilizes major components that had been tested — though not produced — for a Navy bomb about two decades ago.
By contrast, Los Alamos selected a design that involved an atomic trigger and a thermonuclear component that had been tested individually.
However, the two elements were never tested together, said Philip Coyle, who serves on scientific advisory committees and formerly was deputy director at Livermore.
The Los Alamos design is said to contain highly attractive features, including innovative mechanisms that would prevent terrorists from detonating the bomb should they gain access to it, experts said. Those use controls were cited by military officials as a key factor in developing the weapon.
Proponents of the effort say that the nation's existing nuclear stockpile is getting old and that doubts will eventually grow about weapons reliability. They say the new bomb will not have a greater nuclear yield and could not perform any new military missions beyond those of existing weapons.
So far, those arguments have attracted bipartisan support, including from Democrats who have long played a leading role in nuclear arms issues.
Critics say the existing stockpile is perfectly reliable and can be maintained for decades. The new bomb will undermine U.S. efforts to stop nuclear proliferation, they say. In addition, a recent study showed that plutonium components in existing weapons were aging much more slowly than expected.
http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-hbomb2mar02,1,5687051.story?coll=la-headlines-nation

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

New York Times
March 2, 2007
Pg. 8
News Analysis

Latest Reports On Iran And North Korea Show A Newfound Caution Among Analysts

By Mark Mazzetti

WASHINGTON, March 1 — For more than three years, American intelligence officials have insisted that they learned from their mistakes in the months leading to the Iraq war, when murky information about Saddam Hussein's weapons programs was presented as fact and inconclusive judgments were hardened into statements of near certainty.
The more calibrated intelligence assessments that have come to light in recent weeks, particularly on Iran and North Korea, appear to show a new willingness by American spy agencies to concede the limits of their knowledge.
The new caution reflects adherence to what some officials now call "the Powell Rule." That rule is intended to avoid a repetition of former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's humiliation after the satellite photos and intercepted communications he presented to the United Nations Security Council as proof that Iraq was stockpiling banned weapons turned out to be nothing of the sort.
It was in large part because of the Iraq intelligence debacle that top intelligence officials over the past year have overhauled the way in which they pass judgments about some of the world's most difficult spying targets, including Iran and North Korea. The new operating approach is intended to ensure that intelligence is solid before it is publicly presented, and even then, that clear distinctions are made between facts and inferences.
Intelligence professionals have several motivations for the new approach. Those include protecting their own credibility and ensuring that assessments can stand up to careful scrutiny in the wake of multiple government investigations condemning the prewar intelligence assessments about Iraq. Officials also said that greater caution had become ever more necessary because of increasing inexperience in the work force; about 50 percent of current intelligence analysts have less than five years of experience.

At the same time, the use of specific, careful language is seen by intelligence professionals as a barrier that can help to prevent intelligence assessments from being exaggerated, twisted or otherwise misused by policy makers to advance specific agendas.

Under the new guidelines, the assessments produced by intelligence agencies must include detailed descriptions of the subjects on which analysts disagree, and analysts must now "show their work" by including in their judgments the chain of logic that led them to their conclusions.

Intelligence analysis has always been more art than science, and in recent statements, American intelligence officials have laid bare the limits of what they believe they know about Iran and North Korea. Officials have said they are certain that Iranian paramilitary groups are providing lethal bomb material to Iraqi Shiite groups, but they do not know whether this support has been approved at the highest levels of government in Tehran.

In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee this week, Mike McConnell, the new director of national intelligence, said that it was possible Iran could produce a nuclear weapon by the beginning of the next decade, but that it was also possible Iran would not develop a weapon until 2015. At the same hearing, another top official acknowledged publicly that the American intelligence agencies were less certain today than they were five years ago about whether North Korea was pursuing a clandestine uranium enrichment program.

John D. Negroponte formalized the new analytical procedures in a directive issued in January, one of his last acts as director of national intelligence. The directive stated that "the analytic process must be as transparent as possible" and that "analysis must be objective and independent of political considerations."

The pre-emptive war doctrine that President Bush has articulated since the Sept. 11 attacks holds that the United States has an obligation take action against security threats before they fully materialize. A corollary embraced by the White House has held that policy makers must assume the worst about the intentions of adversaries, even with imperfect intelligence about their intentions and capabilities.

That worst-case approach was very much on display when Mr. Bush said with certainty in 2002 and 2003 that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons. On North Korea, Mr. Bush said in November 2002 that "contrary to an agreement they had with the United States, they're enriching uranium, with the desire of developing a weapon."

As intelligence agencies have backed away from those views, some former officials worry that the Iraq experience may cause the pendulum to swing too far in the direction of circumspection. They say that they hope the administration does not accept at face value the denials from North Korea and Iran about their banned weapons programs.

"I worry about that, but I am not willing to accept that doomsday is upon us," said John R. Bolton, who stepped down in December as ambassador to the United Nations after it was clear he would not win Senate confirmation. Mr. Bolton said he still believed that policy makers would not allow intelligence analysts' new caution to soften the United States' policies toward its enemies too much.

The intelligence community's renewed emphasis on debate and dissent has been reflected in decisions about which officials earned promotions in the aftermath of the Iraq intelligence failures.

Thomas Fingar, who once ran the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, is now in charge of all analysis for the director of national intelligence.

It was Mr. Fingar's State Department office in 2002 that produced one of the most significant dissents to that year's National Intelligence Estimate, now discredited, challenging the majority view that Iraq had bought aluminum tubes to build up its nuclear weapons program.

During an interview late last year, Mr. Fingar said it was now his job to ensure there was as much competitive analysis as possible before intelligence reports were completed, if only to avoid a repeat of the 2002 N.I.E. findings, which were pivotal to the Senate vote that authorized the Iraq war.

"The basic idea is to avoid a premature rush to an artificial consensus," Mr. Fingar said. "The interesting thing is not when analysts agree. It's when they disagree."

David E. Sanger contributed reporting.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/02/washington/02intel.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1172865102-xGdSPeSYPLCrTm4/LHzshA

(Return to Articles and Documents List)

Washington Post
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Pg. 13

Punishment To Fit The Nuclear Crime

By Anne-Marie Slaughter and Thomas Wright

A joint sting operation by the CIA and officials from the Republic of Georgia foiled an attempt by a Russian man to sell nuclear-bomb-grade uranium on the black market last summer. This event, only made public in January, was the latest in a series of alarming incidents that remind us of the severity of the threat posed by nuclear terrorism.

To build a nuclear weapon, terrorists must acquire materials from a state. National governments are unlikely to cooperate with terrorists because they fear retaliation from the victim of such an attack and its allies, but rogue scientists, generals or other individuals can work with criminal networks to deliver nuclear weapons to the highest bidder. To counter this danger, we should make the illegal transfer of nuclear materials a crime against humanity triable by international tribunals and by national courts in every country.

Current efforts to close down the nuclear black market have an Achilles' heel -- certain states will not cooperate and will even protect nuclear criminals. For instance, A.Q. Khan, Pakistan's "father of the bomb," lives comfortably under house arrest; U.S. officials have not been allowed even to interrogate him. Pakistan's government is too frightened of a domestic backlash to act harshly against a national hero. Globally, of the dozens suspected of involvement in his network, only three have been successfully prosecuted.

During the Cold War, the United States used deterrence to avert Armageddon; the Soviet Union understood that aggression, even of a conventional nature, would carry too high a price. This old wisdom offers new hope; the United States should actively deter individuals who trade in nuclear materials by making the costs of such behavior unacceptably high.

Making nuclear transfer a crime against humanity captures the enormity of the offense and would dramatically increase the cost of getting caught. Nuclear transfer threatens the lives of millions of people. It merits a place in infamy alongside genocide and other evils. Creating a nuclear transfer taboo would strip away feigned protestations of innocence and illusions of a victimless crime. It would stigmatize black-market financiers and other facilitators of nuclear transfers as the ultimate merchants of death.

In addition to highlighting the dangers of this action, making nuclear transfer a crime against humanity would greatly expand opportunities for prosecution, denying national governments the ability to shelter these criminals. The International Criminal Court has jurisdiction over crimes against humanity. The inclusion of nuclear transfer as such a crime could be confirmed at the next review conference, in 2009. The ICC could then indict and prosecute those suspected of such acts. Even if the United States cannot bring itself to join the ICC, it could work with allies to empower the ICC to act, just as the Bush administration has done on Darfur.

Similarly, as a matter of international law, crimes against humanity are subject to universal jurisdiction. That means that any nation, including the United States, could prosecute nuclear traders anywhere in the world. National governments can pass statutes confirming such jurisdiction in their courts.

Finally, the U.N. Security Council could pass a Chapter VII resolution urging a prosecutor to investigate these cases or even establish a special tribunal to prosecute those suspected of nuclear transfer. A tribunal could be a fallback if efforts to incorporate nuclear transfer into the ICC charter were unsuccessful.

This initiative would make international law work as a tool of American national security strategy rather than as a constraint on it. Failing states would no longer provide safe haven for rogue individuals. The potential costs of nuclear transfer for criminal networks would clearly exceed its potential rewards. It would be multilateralism and international law at its best: hard-edged tools to further American and global interests.

Most important, it is the only way to overcome a real problem. The status quo -- trusting nondemocratic states to safeguard U.S. security interests by cracking down on their criminal networks -- has failed. The convention on genocide was signed after the Holocaust. This time, we should not wait until after the fact to act.

Anne-Marie Slaughter is dean of Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs and a co-director of the Princeton Project on National Security. Thomas Wright is senior researcher for the Princeton Project on National Security.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/01/AR2007030101326.html

(Return to Articles and Documents List)