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Norfolk Virginian-Pilot

March 3, 2007

Hampton Roads To Be A National Model In Disaster Simulation

By Jack Dorsey, The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK - A sleeper terrorist cell suddenly awakens in Norfolk, arriving by ship and prepared to launch an attack. Aboard is a "dirty bomb" - radioactive material packaged with dynamite, set to explode and spread radiation across Hampton Roads.

At the same time, continents away, two ships collide at the entrance to the Suez Canal, causing a major oil spill. In Naples, Italy, another ship explodes while unloading jet fuel at a port.

Then a ship in port at Halifax, Nova Scotia, releases a poison chemical.

Could things get worse? Yes.

A Category III storm over the Bahamas is expected to make landfall in Hampton Roads within 72 hours.

OK, it's fiction. But on April 23, the folks at the Joint Forces Command's Joint Innovation & Experimentation office in Suffolk will be whirling their computers at warp speed to make it look real.

They've chosen Hampton Roads as a national model, using these frightfully complicated scenarios to test the mettle of more than 20 military, federal, state and city agencies in a unique two-part exercise.

The command is conducting the exercise to demonstrate how it can develop future concepts and capabilities and build partnerships at the state, national and international levels.

"It's a great experiment where we have taken all these skill sets of modeling and simulation and modeled the whole Hampton Roads area, with focus on Norfolk," Air Force Gen. Lance Smith, commander of Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, said at an editorial board meeting with The Virginian-Pilot this week.

Plans call for using a laser mapping system, Light Detection and Ranging, to create a copy of Norfolk's buildings, streets and waterfronts in three-dimensional views that are accurate within inches. It is one of many modeling and simulation tools being used in the exercise.

It will show which buildings would be under water when a storm surge of 9 to 12 feet comes ashore, or which roads will allow traffic to get in or out of the city, he said.

The event will be indoors and won't be visible to the public.

The first part of the exercise, called Noble Resolve, will take place from April 23-27. It will concentrate on secret portions of the sleeper cell attacks; results likely will not be disclosed to the public.

The second part, from April 27-28, is called the Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise and will focus on the simulated hurricane.

It will be anchored in Richmond by the Emergency Operations Center and will use computer models to track the hurricane hitting Hampton Roads, said Rear Adm. James A. Winnefeld Jr., who heads the Suffolk-based Joint and Experimentation Directorate.

"This is an exercise and an experiment," Winnefeld said Thursday. "It's a new thing for Virginia, and we are encouraged we are doing this in advance of a crisis, rather than when the crisis hits."

James Talbot, Norfolk's deputy coordinator for its Emergency Operations Center, said Thursday he was not yet aware of details of the exercise.

"I expect the city will participate with a lot of public safety response teams from the fire and police departments," he said.

Schools, hospitals and many other institutions also will be involved, but only from a computer view in the Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise scenario.

The exercises will put emergency responders through simulated terrorist attacks, as well as weather-related disasters. Both will include representatives from Northern Command, European Command, Strategic Command, Pacific Command, the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, the Department of Energy, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Guard Bureau.

The hurricane exercise will draw representatives from the state government, Virginia National Guard, Hampton Roads ports, University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, Maersk Shipping, the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center, and other emergency responders.

Winnefeld said the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, based at Fort Monroe in Hampton, is participating as well.

The command "asked us to create a homeland security event that would impact on their deployment of forces," he said.

That's why the exercise includes clogging up the Suez Canal and detonating a refinery in Naples.

The simulation will provide a series of lessons, similar to what the command did after Hurricane Katrina, Smith said.

Communication, or the lack of it, will likely be the main area of concern, judging from the lessons of past hurricanes.

"We still haven't fixed it, and we will never fix it until we have exercises like this," Smith said.

Only then will a mayor find out, say, that his car radio can't communicate with the police chief, who can't communicate with the fire chief or the FEMA guy, because they all got great deals from their favorite salesman on different communications gear, Smith said.

"Theoretically, if we were doing the exercise and things didn't go very well, the governor, or the FEMA director, or the mayor, or even me, could say: 'That was awful and we need to go back and do it again,'" Smith said.

<http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=120478&ran=133685&tref=y>

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Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)
March 3, 2007

Dem Seeks Intelligence On N. Korea Nukes

By McClatchy-Tribune

WASHINGTON — A top Senate Democrat demanded Friday that the Bush administration explain the intelligence it received on North Korea's nuclear weapons program after testimony this week suggested uncertainty about whether the communist regime has acquired the capacity to produce highly enriched uranium.

President Bush has said repeatedly that North Korea has been producing highly enriched uranium, which is used to produce nuclear bombs.

Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., made the request after testimony before his Senate Armed Services Committee revealed that U.S. intelligence agencies had only "mid-level" confidence that North Korea was secretly pursuing a uranium-enrichment effort in addition to a publicly known plutonium program. Both enriched uranium and plutonium can be used to make nuclear weapons.

The assessment appeared to mark a shift backward from earlier judgments in which the intelligence community said it had "high confidence" that North Korea was building an industrial-scale uranium enrichment program.

Levin's letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice indicated concern that the Bush administration may have overstated U.S. intelligence about North Korea's nuclear activities in order to justify its hard-line policies toward the reclusive Stalinist regime.

Levin also asked Gates and Rice whether any "special assessments" were given to the administration that Congress didn't receive.

"From 2001 to the present, did the Intelligence Community provide special assessments on North Korea's highly enriched uranium program to the State Department, Defense Department, White House, NSC (National Security Council), or the Office of the Vice President?" Levin wrote. "If so, when were such special assessments provided? Please provide copies of those assessments."

Bush alleged that North Korea was enriching uranium at a Nov. 7, 2002, news conference — when there was no intelligence to substantiate his contention, McClatchy reported Thursday.

Bush made similar assertions at three election debates during the 2004 presidential campaign.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/171815.php>

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Washington Times
March 3, 2007
Pg. 1

Seoul Wants No Trace Of Nukes

By David R. Sands and Andrew Salmon, The Washington Times

South Korea's foreign minister said yesterday that North Korea must abandon all aspects of its nuclear endeavors, including a suspected uranium enrichment program, as part of a deal to solve the peninsula's nuclear crisis, even if the program has barely gotten off the ground.

Song Min-soon, Seoul's minister for foreign affairs and trade, sidestepped new questions over the state of Pyongyang's uranium-enrichment program, the key charge in the Bush administration's case that the North had violated past agreements to halt its nuclear weapons programs.

"Whether [the uranium program] is just a single piece of paper or actual, tangible facilities, all these efforts should be abolished in the course of implementing" the six-nation deal reached Feb. 13 to end the North's nuclear programs, Mr. Song said on a visit to Washington.

The South Korean envoy made the comment just before a meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in which the recent North Korea nuclear deal reached Feb. 13 in Beijing was a prime topic of conversation.

The latest nuclear crisis on the divided Korean Peninsula dates back to 2002, when Bush administration officials said the North admitted it was secretly enriching uranium even as it suspended a parallel plutonium program to make nuclear bombs. The North has denied it made the admission, and U.S. intelligence officials now say they do not know the scope of the North's uranium programs.

In Pyongyang yesterday, officials from the North and South agreed to work on the first phases of the Feb. 13 accord, as well as on reuniting divided families, testing a pan-Korean rail link and preparing new shipments of aid to the North.

"The South and the North will work jointly to ensure a sound implementation of the agreement on denuclearizing and peace on the Korean Peninsula," the two sides said in a joint statement issued after four days of ministerial-level talks.

The Beijing deal calls for a phased end to all the North's nuclear programs in return for aid, energy and the prospect of full diplomatic relations with the United States and countries in the region.

But South Korean officials yesterday refused to restore full aid shipments until the North's main nuclear reactor facility had been shut down. Seoul suspended aid after the North's missile tests last summer, and Pyongyang responded by cutting diplomatic contacts and meetings of divided families.

The South agreed verbally to provide the North with rice and fertilizer, but did not specify the date of delivery or the amount to be shipped.

"We plan to provide rice and fertilizer at the level of previous years," South Korean Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung told reporters, "but we will do it in stages, following the necessary process."

In Washington, Mr. Song said he planned to coordinate closely with Washington as the nuclear deal moves ahead. Some U.S. conservatives have criticized the deal, saying the North will pocket the promised aid and renege again on promises to end its nuclear programs. But Mr. Song said "speculation" about whether Pyongyang could be trusted was "rather futile," and the key will be convincing the North that its own best interests lie in denuclearization.

"Showing North Korea that the clouds hovering over it have a silver lining will help dispel its sense of insecurity so it may breathe comfortably in its nuclear-free future," he said. "In this case security is a subjective state of mind rather than an objective condition of being."

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, said yesterday its director, Mohamed ElBaradei, would be making a two-day visit to Pyongyang starting March 13 -- five years after the North expelled IAEA inspectors and resumed plutonium production for nuclear bombs.

The North's chief negotiator is also in the United States, preparing for unprecedented talks next week with U.S. officials on the opening of diplomatic relations. The talks are expected to take place next week.

Andrew Salmon reported from Seoul.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070303-121443-6306r.htm>

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Miami Herald
March 3, 2007

U.S. And China Find Parallel Course In New Crises

Despite their usual differences, China and the United States are working jointly to cool off important international crises.

By Barry Schweid, Associated Press

WASHINGTON - National interests make strange bedfellows. There could be no better example than the warming relationship between the United States and China, two old antagonists.

If North Korea, indeed, has agreed finally to get on a pathway to nuclear disarmament, a cherished Bush administration goal, China can take a bow for diplomatic success. It took the lead in diplomacy with Pyongyang. More quietly, China has intensified its pressure on Iran to halt enrichment of uranium, another prime U.S. foreign policy goal.

And as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, China probably will be at the table in Baghdad around March 10 when Iraq hosts a regional meeting seeking stability.

The meeting will be significant for bringing together American, Iranian and Syrian diplomats, a reversal in the Bush administration's shunning of Tehran and Damascus.

Reflecting on the breakthrough Feb. 13 decision by North Korea to dismantle its principal reactor in exchange for fuel, U.S. negotiator Christopher Hill paid high tribute to China this week in Congress. "We really have lined up our interests with them," Hill said, citing especially the goal of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

For one thing, Hill said, China wants "clarity" from North Korea on abandoning its nuclear weapons program.

That's a diplomatic way of saying China is taking on the task of making sure North Korea does not slip out of what appears to be a firm commitment.

Pressing Iran

On the other hot nuclear front, China used a visit to Beijing on Thursday by Iran's deputy foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, to urge Iran to cease uranium enrichment as demanded by the U.N. Security Council.

If Iran continues to defy the council, claiming its enrichment is not part of a weapons program, the Bush administration is likely to propose economic sanctions against Tehran.

China's cooperation would be vital. It has the power to veto any council resolution, but could hold its nose, abstain, and not block punishment.

Its expected participation in a meeting of U.S., European, Russian, Iranian and Syrian ambassadors in Baghdad, then a follow-up meeting of foreign ministers in April is most intriguing. It extends China's reach diplomatically, and opens a door to wider cooperation with the Bush administration as it seeks a solution to the bloody insurgency in Iraq.

There will be much to talk about when Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte flies to Beijing today for two days of meetings as part of an Asia trip.

Describing China as a hypothetical adversary that helps the Pentagon justify its budget requests, James Dobbins, senior security analyst at the Rand Corp., said, "When we find a real adversary like North Korea or al Qaeda, China becomes an ally and not an adversary."

Enemies enough

And, Dobbins said in an interview, "We are in a phase now where we have real enemies. We don't have to make up hypothetical ones."

Old China hands cautioned, however, against going overboard. James R. Lilley, a Reagan-era ambassador to China and South Korea, said that "the relationship with China goes up and goes down" historically.

"It is not tranquil or stable," he said in a telephone interview. "There are differences but also complementary interests."

On the down side currently, Lilley cited accusations of Chinese currency manipulation and copyright infringements. Jeffrey Bader, director of the Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution, said China is focused on economic development and for that it needs a peaceful world.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/578/story/30020.html>

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Washington Times

March 3, 2007

Pg. 6

NATO Missile Defense Shield Eyed

By Mark John, Reuters News Agency

WIESBADEN, Germany -- Germany called yesterday for talks on creating a NATO missile defense shield for Europe, a day after the United States vowed to press ahead with its system without alliance approval.

The head of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency said Thursday Washington wanted to secure the understanding of 25 NATO members for its plans to build a missile shield in Eastern Europe, but was not seeking their green light.

The United States' European allies are concerned the move will damage their ties with Moscow, and Germany has led calls for wider consultations on the project. Ukraine has also complained Washington had not consulted with it. Three ex-Soviet states in the Caucasus -- Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia -- said yesterday that Washington had not yet asked them to host the anti-missile shield.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering said having a radar in the Caucasus, just south of Russia, would be useful, but not essential. He did not specify a country.

"We should discuss developing such a defense measure within a NATO framework," German Defense Minister Franz Josef Jung told reporters on the margins of a meeting of EU defense chiefs in the German city of Wiesbaden. Mr. Jung said Russian concerns over the shield could be allayed by talks within NATO's existing NATO-Russia Council, a forum for discussing defense issues between the former Cold War foes.

"I think that is the right way forward," he said.

The United States wants to set up a radar system in the Czech Republic and a missile battery in Poland as part of a shield that would counter missiles fired by what Washington calls "rogue states" such as Iran and North Korea.

Mr. Jung did not say whether Germany was prepared to participate in the huge cost of such a shield but his spokesman said Berlin acknowledged action was needed to address the threat of attack.

"The question of a threat from long-range missiles exists and this threat must be addressed by concrete measures," Defense Ministry spokesman Thomas Raabe said, adding that ultimately any missile defense system should be brought under a NATO roof.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's junior Social Democrat coalition partners are worried such a shield could provoke a new Cold War.

Moscow sees the system as an encroachment on its former sphere of influence and an attempt to shift the post-Cold War balance of power, but a top Russian general was quoted as saying yesterday Russia had its own missile shield and need not worry.

"We have everything needed to adequately respond to all these deployments," Russian news agencies quoted Russia's air force commander Gen. Vladimir Mikhailov as saying.

"They have lots of cash, let them spend it," he added.

An opinion poll yesterday showed nearly two-thirds of Czechs opposed hosting the radar system. The Czech government is due to respond by the end of the month to a U.S. request to open talks on the system. It has spoken in favor, but may face problems getting any proposal through parliament.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070302-113934-6599r.htm>

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New York Times

March 3, 2007

New Design For Warhead Is Awarded To Livermore

By William J. Broad

The Bush administration announced yesterday the winner of a competition to design the nation's first new nuclear weapon in nearly two decades and immediately set out to reassure Russia and China that the weapon, if built, would pose no new threat to either nation.

If President Bush decides to authorize production and Congress agrees, the research could lead to a long, expensive process to replace all American nuclear warheads in the next few decades with new designs.

The first to be replaced with the new Reliable Replacement Weapon would be the W-76, a warhead for missiles deployed on submarines.

Officials said the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California would design the replacement warhead based on previously tested components, allowing the administration to argue that no new underground tests would be necessary before deploying the new weapon.

Officials said, however, the Livermore design might eventually draw on technical contributions from a more novel approach on the drawing boards at Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico, Livermore's longtime rival.

The surprise choice of a single laboratory reversed a tentative decision, reported in January, to combine elements of the Livermore and Los Alamos designs. In a behind-the-scenes debate over the last two months, nuclear experts inside and outside the government faulted the hybrid approach as unusual and technically risky, with some calling it a "Frankenbomb."

Administration officials said the Livermore design had won primarily because its main elements were detonated beneath the Nevada desert decades ago, making it a better candidate under the nuclear test ban treaty, which the United States has signed but not ratified.

Thomas P. D'Agostino, acting administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration at the Energy Department, told reporters that the Livermore design was "the most conservative approach."

Administration officials said the hybrid had been rejected after senior members of the Navy, which will manage the W-76 replacement, worried that members of Congress would perceive it as more likely to require explosive testing. The announcement of the research path had been expected in early January but was delayed, officials said, because of last-minute Navy concerns over control of financing and dividing the scientific labor.

The potentially expensive initiative faces an uncertain future and has generated much criticism from skeptics who argue that a new design for the nuclear arsenal is unneeded and is a potential stimulus to a global nuclear arms race.

"This is a solution in search of a problem," said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, a group in Washington. "There is an urgent need to reduce these weapons, not expand them. This will keep the Chinese, the Russians and others on guard to improve their own stockpiles."

Among lawmakers who declared their opposition was Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California.

"What worries me," Mrs. Feinstein said, "is that the minute you begin to put more sophisticated warheads on the existing fleet, you are essentially creating a new nuclear weapon. And it's just a matter of time before other nations do the same thing."

Critics had ridiculed the hybrid approach as a compromise dictated by the politics of survival for the nuclear laboratories, rather than technical merit. In an unusual move, even senior arms designers spoke out publicly against what they called serious risks of merging differing designs from different laboratories.

"A hybrid design by inexperienced personnel, managed by committee, is not the best approach," John Pedicini, technical head of the design team at Los Alamos, said last month in a public blog entry.

Mr. Pedicini conceded that the Livermore design had features "that are an advance over ours, and if we get the assignment, I would incorporate them in our design."

"If this is what is meant by hybrid," he said, "then the outcome would be good."

The goal is to replace the arsenal of aging warheads with a generation meant to be sturdier, more reliable, safer from accidental detonation and more secure from theft.

The replacements will have the same explosive yields and other military characteristics of the current weapons, officials said, a point that senior administration officials have made to Russia in arguing that the new weapons do not represent an expansion of the American arsenal.

Mrs. Feinstein cited a report in December saying plutonium pits have a lifespan of at least 85 years, leading critics to question whether the new weapons are necessary.

David E. Sanger contributed reporting.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/03/washington/03nuke.html>

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Washington Post

March 3, 2007

Pg. 8

U.S. Selects Design For New Nuclear Warhead

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

The National Nuclear Security Administration has selected a design from Lawrence Livermore and Sandia national laboratories that could become the basis for the first new nuclear warhead produced by the United States in more than 20 years.

The purpose of the new Reliable Replacement Warhead is to provide, beginning in 2012, a new generation of secure nuclear warheads -- initially for submarine-launched missiles -- that would provide a credible deterrent well into the mid-21st century.

"RRW will take advantage of today's science to ensure long-term confidence in the future stockpile" of nuclear warheads, Thomas P. D'Agostino, the NNSA's acting administrator, said yesterday. The Livermore design beat out one submitted by Los Alamos National Laboratory because there was a "higher confidence" that it could be certified without underground nuclear testing, D'Agostino said. He added that the Los Alamos design has some "highly innovative" features that will be developed "in parallel with the Livermore effort."

The design team will work with the Navy over the next 10 months to define a cost schedule and a production plan. The NNSA's 2008 budget includes \$88 million for the RRW, though Congress could limit that funding and slow the program.

According to a chart prepared by the NNSA for Congress and made available to The Washington Post, the RRW program "decreases the likelihood of the need for nuclear testing for certification." Another program goal is to build the warheads so that "unauthorized use of the weapon" would be "impossible without re-manufacture," according to NNSA charts.

The new warheads would require an upgrade of the nation's 50-year-old nuclear weapons manufacturing complex, according to the NNSA. The current U.S. stockpile of about 6,000 "legacy" warheads is already being refurbished. Beginning in the early 1990s, as the Cold War ended and a test moratorium between the United States and Soviet Union was reached, the United States halted the development of new warheads and shifted to supervising its stockpile, making sure the deployed warheads remained reliable. At the same time, those no longer needed began to be dismantled.

During the administrations of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, the Pentagon and the Energy Department planned to put the stockpiles through a life-extension process every 20 to 30 years. The nonnuclear components of the warheads were to be tested and replaced if necessary. With the United States now committed to reducing its deployed warheads to between 1,700 and 2,200 by 2012, the stockpile five years from now would primarily consist of older warheads -- with fewer than half of them refurbished, according to the NNSA.

The Bush administration's 2001 Nuclear Posture Review called for a study on developing a new generation of nuclear weapons, including a controversial nuclear "bunker buster" and special warheads designed for destroying chemical or biological weapons. Congress did not fund those programs and, instead, redirected the money toward a refurbishment program for existing warheads -- a slow and time-consuming process.

It took almost 15 years to refurbish the W-87 warheads on the Minuteman III ICBMs -- six years to determine what needed replacement and eight more to complete the process, according to NNSA and Pentagon officials. And the W-76 -- the warhead for the Trident submarine-launched ICBM -- has been under study for refurbishment since 1998, but work on modernizing the warheads is just starting.

The NNSA has long said that one goal of the RRW is to "render unauthorized use of weapon impossible," a quote taken from the still-secret National Security Presidential Directive 28, titled "Nuclear Weapons Command, Control,

Safety, and Security." The new RRW design includes a "use control" device, which locks the nuclear element of a weapon so it cannot be used should it fall into enemy hands.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/02/AR2007030201203.html>

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Washington Post

March 4, 2007

Pg. 5

Nuclear Warhead Plan Draws Opposition

Some Lawmakers Are Against New Weapon, While Others Seek Justification

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

The selection of a basic design for what could become a new generation of U.S. nuclear warheads has drawn immediate opposition from some key members of Congress.

The National Nuclear Security Administration announced on Friday that it had selected a design by the California-based Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory for the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW). It would be the first of a new generation of secure and reliable nuclear warheads initially intended for the Navy's submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Within the next 12 months, a team from Livermore and the Navy is to put together cost estimates and an engineering and production plan that would be presented to Congress next year for approval, according to acting NNSA Administrator Thomas P. D'Agostino.

Rep. Peter J. Visclosky (D-Ind.), the new chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that controls the funds for the nuclear weapons complex, has sharply questioned why a new warhead is needed. Saying the NNSA announcement "puts the cart before the horse," he called on the Bush administration to present a "clear, coherent national policy" to justify the new warhead.

Visclosky said he plans to hold oversight hearings and may seek to slow or eliminate the RRW if the administration does not present a strategy "that defines the future mission, the emerging threats, and the specific U.S. nuclear stockpile necessary to achieve the strategic goals."

The same subcommittee, under the previous chairman, Rep. David L. Hobson (R-Ohio), helped eliminate the Bush administration's plan to develop a nuclear "bunker buster" weapon and, instead, initiated a program to upgrade the reliability of the current stockpile of Cold War weapons. The Bush administration turned this into a program to develop a new nuclear warhead.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), a longtime opponent of new nuclear weapons, has declared that she is "100 percent opposed" to building the RRW. A member of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds the nuclear complex, she said in a statement: "While I appreciate the fact that Lawrence Livermore was selected, this in no way answers my questions about the Reliable Replacement Warhead program."

She questioned how other countries would view the U.S. effort to develop new nuclear weapons at the same time that the United States is pushing Iran, North Korea and other countries to drop nuclear weapons programs. "What worries me is that the minute you begin to put more sophisticated warheads on the existing fleet, you are essentially creating a new nuclear weapon. And it's just a matter of time before other nations do the same thing," she said.

D'Agostino told reporters on Friday that the RRW "is not about starting a new nuclear arms race." He said the program would use a warhead design that was tested in the 1980s but package it with new features, such as insensitive high explosives less liable to explode by accident, as well as locking devices that would prevent the warhead from being used if it fell into the hands of terrorists.

There is congressional support for the warhead development. Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Armed Services subcommittee on strategic forces, which also has jurisdiction over the weapons program, said she is "encouraged" by the NNSA decision. But she added that it "is only an early step in what will be a long evaluation process."

With the design going to Livermore, located in her district, Tauscher said the NNSA and the Pentagon "appear to have followed Congress's clear directions." She said her subcommittee's first hearings on the RRW will take place this week.

Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R) of New Mexico, home of Los Alamos National Laboratory, whose design lost out to Livermore's, said: "The important thing is that we're taking a step forward with the RRW to transform and reduce our stockpile, improve security and reliability, and lower the life-cycle cost." He hinted that this may only be the first of a series of RRWs, saying, "One system is not equivalent to a transformation, and we need to move on a second design competition."

Although Livermore's warhead is designed to be carried by a Navy intercontinental ballistic missile, the NNSA and the Pentagon are about to begin a study to determine what elements are needed for an RRW that would be carried by an Air Force ICBM.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/03/AR2007030301077.html>

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New York Times

March 4, 2007

Pg. 10

Iran President Meets Saudi To Discuss Mideast Issues

By Hassan M. Fattah

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia, Sunday, March 4 — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran met with King Abdullah here in the Saudi capital on Saturday to address the Middle East's growing sectarian and political crises.

Mr. Ahmadinejad, who arrived in Riyadh in the afternoon, was greeted at the airport by King Abdullah, a rare honor from the aging monarch, and talks began shortly afterward, the official Saudi Press Agency reported. Later, he was the guest of honor at a state dinner put on by the king and attended by top Saudi officials and dignitaries, and he held further meetings with the king.

Without elaboration, Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi foreign minister, told Reuters, "The two parties have agreed to stop any attempt aimed at spreading sectarian strife in the region."

The trip was Mr. Ahmadinejad's first official visit to the Saudi kingdom, and is widely believed to have been set up at the behest of the Iranians. It was the culmination of months of diplomatic efforts by the two regional powers, as well as other Arab countries.

The two leaders met just as diplomats from Germany and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council talked Saturday about tougher sanctions on Iran for its continued uranium enrichment efforts in defiance of the Council. The diplomats, speaking in a conference call, ended their discussion without an agreement. King Abdullah and Mr. Ahmadinejad were believed to be focused on finding ways to end the political standoff in Lebanon between Hezbollah, backed by Iran, and the government of Fouad Siniora, supported by the United States. Saudi Arabia and Iran have expressed alarm at the sectarian violence in Iraq, worrying that it could fuel similar tensions throughout the Middle East.

Saudi Arabia has in recent months led an aggressive diplomatic effort to counterbalance Iran's growing influence in the region, most recently playing host in Mecca to the warring Palestinian organizations, Hamas and Fattah, to resolve their differences and to arrive at a government of national unity. Saudi Arabia is also said to be working to bring Lebanese parties together to reach a peaceful settlement of the three-month crisis.

But many analysts also expected Mr. Ahmadinejad to offer a more stark message warning to Arab governments that everyone would be harmed by any possible United States attack on Iran. The United States has been expanding its naval presence in the Persian Gulf in recent weeks, with a second aircraft carrier group now in the region.

Mr. Ahmadinejad departed late Saturday night, the Saudi Press Agency reported, after about eight hours on the ground, despite initial plans for him to leave on Sunday.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/04/world/middleeast/04saudi.html>

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Los Angeles Times

March 4, 2007

North Korea Inspections Will Put U.S. To The Test Too

The return of U.N. monitors could disprove White House assertions about Pyongyang's nuclear program.

By Bob Drogin, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — North Korea's unexpected promise last month to open its nuclear weapons arsenals and production facilities to U.N. inspectors provided a welcome foreign policy success for the White House, but may prove embarrassing as well.

At stake is whether the Bush administration overstated a purported secret North Korean program to produce highly enriched uranium for nuclear bombs in 2002. President Bush's charges that autumn about the alleged program helped derail an accord intended to freeze the weapons effort before it could produce fissile material for a bomb.

North Korea tossed out United Nations nuclear inspectors, built up a stockpile of plutonium and finally tested a small nuclear device last October, using plutonium rather than enriched uranium as fuel.

Under last month's agreement among North Korea, the U.S. and four other countries, the U.N.'s chief nuclear inspector, Mohamed ElBaradei, has scheduled a three-day visit to Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, beginning March 13 to arrange the inspectors' return. The inspectors could validate the U.S. suspicions, or could prove them unfounded.

Questions about the uranium enrichment effort emerged last week when the chief U.S. intelligence officer for North Korea, Joseph R. DeTrani, appeared to suggest during a congressional hearing that intelligence authorities had backtracked from their original classified assessments.

Afterward, senior intelligence officials argued that their assessments had not changed.

They said the evidence was clear that in mid-2002, North Korea obtained uranium-spinning centrifuges and other tools and components necessary for an illicit enrichment program. However, they said, the evidence has always appeared far less conclusive as to whether Pyongyang procured enough equipment to start industrial-scale enrichment of uranium, whether it installed and operated any of the machinery or whether it has sought additional supplies.

The intelligence officials and some others spoke on condition of anonymity when discussing internal interpretations of intelligence assessments.

John D. Negroponte, deputy secretary of State, said Friday that inspections should resolve the questions. The recent accord calls for a "full and complete" accounting of North Korea's nuclear programs, including "its uranium enrichment activities," he told reporters in Tokyo.

Negroponte, the former director of national intelligence, said the judgment of the intelligence community "is that they are very confident that North Korea had an enrichment program in the past, and they are moderately confident that this program still continues."

A U.S. intelligence official in Washington said the apparent shift in language is "not a change in what the confidence level was. It's not an effort to look back at what we thought of the program. It's an effort to look at where it is in the present."

Another U.S. intelligence official said the question of what North Korea did with its centrifuges, and how far or how quickly it progressed in uranium enrichment, "was always presented as murky and with caveats. Nothing has changed. We are absolutely not backtracking or changing the judgment."

But a U.S. diplomat with access to the intelligence said the administration was "trying to walk back some of the rhetoric."

"The problem is they've opened up a can of worms," the diplomat said. "Was this another case of faulty intelligence, like Iraq? Or is it possible they cooked the books?"

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-Mich.) sought clarification from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, asking them in a letter whether any intelligence assessments on North Korea's programs had changed since 2002. "If so, when did it change, why did it change and how did it change?" he wrote.

The Senate Intelligence Committee also is "taking steps to understand the evolution" of the assessments on North Korea since 2002, an aide said.

Few doubts appeared in White House statements and public CIA reports on the enrichment program in 2002.

At a news conference in November that year, President Bush said: "We discovered that, contrary to an agreement they had with the United States, they're enriching uranium, with a desire of developing a weapon."

In an unclassified estimate for Congress that month, the CIA wrote that North Korea "is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational — which could be as soon as mid-decade."

Robert Gallucci, who was the chief U.S. negotiator with North Korea in the mid-1990s, called the mid-decade conjecture a "worst-case scenario."

"It could also be 10 to 20 years," he said last week. "The estimates were a wild guess."

David Albright, an arms expert who heads the Institute for Science and International Security, a nonprofit group that tracks nuclear issues and opposes arms proliferation, said the U.S. assessments of North Korea's uranium enrichment effort "appear to be flawed." He compared them to prewar misjudgments on Iraq's alleged weapons of mass destruction.

"I think there were deliberate attempts to hype all this," Albright said. "Now that the administration has got a deal with North Korea, they're on the other side. They don't want to slit their own throats with things they said back in 2002."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-norkor4mar04,1,4685659.story>

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Washington Post
March 4, 2007
Pg. B7

The Nuclear Threat From China

By Mark Helprin

Before rejoicing over detente with Kim Jong Il, it might be useful to remember that although agreements were reached in the past, his countrymen later built a number of nuclear weapons and carried out a test. Also, North Korea, with a rich chemical and biological arsenal having long ago neutralized American tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, has embarked solely on a program of survival by extortion and will gladly forfeit a power it does not need in exchange for recognition and some essential commodities. The Asian nuclear power of which we must take account is not North Korea but China.

The forerunners of China's government were able to defeat Chiang Kai-shek, fight the United States to a draw in Korea and, merely by means of their country's looming potential, help defeat America in Vietnam. This they did in chaos, poverty and without modern arms, but with strategy bred in the bone. Since 1978, using their extraordinary and sustained economic and technical growth to build military capacity, the Chinese have deliberately modeled themselves on the Meiji (who rapidly transformed feudal Japan into an industrial state able to vanquish the Russian fleet at Tsushima).

In altering their position relative to that of the United States, the Chinese have received generous assistance from the past two American presidents, who have accomplished first a carefree diminution of our orders of battle and then the incompetent deployment of what was left, in a campaign analogous to losing a protracted struggle with Portugal.

China advances and we decline because, among other things, its vision is disciplined and clear, while ours is burdened by fear, decadence and officials who understand neither Chinese grand strategy nor its nuclear component. This has led the United States unwittingly to encourage China to move toward nuclear parity. In the next five years, as we reduce our arsenal from 10,000 strategic warheads to 1,700, China's MIRV'd silo-based missiles and imminent generations of MIRV'd mobile and sea-based ICBMs will easily allow a breakout from warhead numbers now variously estimated to range from 80 to 1,800.

Once, the vast imbalance (in 1987, 500:1) might have discouraged China from such augmentation, but no longer. Our reductions and their growth provide fewer targets for more missiles and will create the possibility and therefore the temptation, however remote, of a first strike. As we have cut the stable sea-based leg of our nuclear deterrent from 37 ballistic missile submarines to 14, China works to build its own and a fleet that can provide protected bastions at sea as well as hunt down the small number of American boats on station.

Nuclear competition between mature and newly emerging powers is neither unprecedented nor unexpected, but the rule has always been that if nuclear potential exists it must be countered. Although we may no longer subscribe to this, China does. Aware that the United States planned to use nuclear weapons had China violated the Korean armistice, China would understandably seek nuclear balance, if not preponderance.

The danger lies not solely in quantitative instabilities but in potential nuclear strategies that technical evolution has elevated above Cold War paradigms. It is one thing for a few experts to foresee these strategies but quite another to obtain from a people no longer confident of its right to self-defense the political consensus, appropriations and authority to counter them. Consider just one scenario, highlighted by the recent successful test of China's anti-satellite weapon, part of a strategy to exploit technological asymmetries.

Given China's appetites and our alliances and interests, a war is not inconceivable in Taiwan, or in Korea. To remove American nuclear escalation from the equation, China would need not parity but only a deterrent such as it has long possessed. The Chinese, however, whose nuclear thresholds are dissimilar to ours, would have other options.

They know that every facet of America's economy, military and society depends on individual and networked electronic devices. Were these to fail all at once and irreparably, the nation would seize up, perhaps for years. Faced with victory, or with loss, they might choose to -- and who would venture to guarantee that they would not? -- detonate half a dozen high-megatonnage nuclear charges in the mesosphere, in an electro-magnetic pulse (EMP) strike perhaps not even in American airspace, cooking almost every circuit and semiconductor, rendering the American government blind, deaf and dumber than it is already and the country unable to resist the inroads that would surely follow.

Though we would undoubtedly respond in kind, China is not as technically dependent as are we. Nor, given China's sufficiency for a counterstrike, could we deter an EMP attack with the prospect of massive retaliation, especially because an EMP strike, with no immediate casualties, would seem as peaceful as snow in still air.

The trick in nuclear strategy is to maintain stability by balancing potentials and thus to discourage events from converting the hypothetical to the actual. Required in this case -- only one of many -- is the electronic hardening, redundancy and redesign of essential systems and networks; and missile defense, which would not only close the

first-strike window by shielding our second-strike capacity from destruction but protect against an EMP strike directly and dissuade China in the first place by making its deterrent less certain.

Were we to proceed along these lines, we could diminish the chances that China might in the not-so-distant future be tempted to win a nuclear war without fighting a nuclear war. But given that we have ignored explicit warnings of the congressionally chartered EMP commission, what are the chances that we will act on an opinion we dare not even form? In regard to war and the sometimes counterintuitive actions for avoiding it, we are no longer either confident or clear-sighted. What a pity to have come so far to find that our rivals and enemies all over the world can run rings around us because half of our politicians have lost their intelligence and the other half have lost their nerve.

Mark Helprin, a novelist, is a senior fellow at the Claremont Institute and a distinguished visiting fellow at Hillsdale College. This article will also appear in the Claremont Review of Books.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/02/AR2007030201402.html>

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New York Times

March 5, 2007

Pg. 7

U.S. To Offer North Korea Face-Saving Nuclear Plan

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON, March 4 — In an effort to make the best of newly murky intelligence about North Korea, Bush administration officials say they plan to tell the North's nuclear negotiators on Monday that Washington's doubts about how much progress the country has made in enriching uranium gives North Korea a face-saving way to surrender its nuclear equipment.

The new approach to solve a dispute over the existence and extent of a uranium program, which intelligence agencies say could have been developed using equipment that the North Koreans purchased from Pakistan, will come at a meeting with North Korea at the United Nations. It is the first session intended to hammer out a schedule under which North Korea is supposed to disable its main nuclear plant and then account for all its nuclear programs. Because the agreement includes providing North Korea with a million tons of fuel oil before it turns over its suspected arsenal of nuclear arms and fuel, some of President Bush's conservative allies have denounced it as a dangerous concession. Mr. Bush has called it a "first step," though it bears similarities to the kind of deal that the administration rejected in its first term.

On Sunday, Christopher R. Hill, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said that at the meeting he planned to "form an agenda to work on our bilateral relationship — what's involved in the establishment of diplomatic relations, what's involved before North Korea can get off the state-sponsor-of-terrorism list, and how to get them off the Trading with the Enemies Act." He said he would be "pressing for disclosure of all their nuclear programs, including highly enriched uranium."

Persuading North Korea to address that program will be particularly challenging — both because the North Koreans have denied seeking to enrich uranium and because a top American intelligence official told Congress last week that there was only moderate confidence that the equipment North Korea bought had been used. But that ambiguity, officials say, may give North Korea the chance to turn over its equipment with a vague explanation that an effort to produce energy, rather than a bomb, did not work out.

That is a very different tone than intelligence officials struck in November 2002, just after American officials told the North Koreans that they had discovered evidence of the purchase of centrifuges, the high-speed devices that enrich uranium, from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the head of Pakistan's nuclear program.

In an unclassified, single-page report distributed to members of Congress at the time, top agency officials, headed by George J. Tenet, then the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, reported, "We recently learned that the North is constructing a plant that could produce enough weapons-grade uranium for two or more nuclear weapons per year when fully operational — which could be as soon as mid-decade."

On Friday, three days after the testimony of Joseph DeTrani, the North Korea coordinator for the director of national intelligence, suggesting doubts about the current state of the program, Senator Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan and the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, sent a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates seeking more answers.

"Is this still the intelligence community's assessment?" he asked of the 2002 report. "If not, why, and when did the intelligence community revise this assessment? What is the current intelligence community assessment?"

He also asked what underlay the conclusion that an enrichment plant was under construction.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/05/world/asia/05korea.html?ref=washington>

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Nuclear Weapons: Annual Assessment of the Safety, Performance, and Reliability of the Nation's Stockpile.

GAO-07-243R, February 2.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-243R>

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Washington Times

March 6, 2007

Pg. 1

Russia, U.S. To Discuss START

Replacement of treaty unlikely

By Nicholas Kraley, Washington Times

The Bush administration has rebuffed Russian overtures to negotiate a legally binding replacement of the 1991 START I treaty that reduced the two countries' strategic nuclear forces but is set to expire in 2009, U.S. and Russian officials said yesterday.

An expert-level meeting between the former enemies to discuss options after the treaty's expiration is expected to take place as soon as this month, but their differences are not likely to be resolved, the officials said.

While the Russians insist on a legally binding agreement, the Americans have focused on "transparency and confidence-building measures" that would still allow both sides to verify each others' arsenals and capabilities.

"We are not going to engage in Cold War-style arms control," said Robert Joseph, former undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. "We don't want to make nuclear warheads the currency of our relationship with Russia. Issues like cooperation on combating nuclear terrorism are much more important today."

Nuclear and arms control experts said the significance of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) goes beyond its disarmament goals. It provides the only mutual verification mechanism, which is also relied upon by the 2002 Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT).

"Without a verification regime, we'd be dependent on satellites and human intelligence to assess the Russian arsenal," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. "That would lead to further mistrust and mutual suspicion."

Mr. Joseph said the United States is not opposed to copying from START measures such as site visits in any new agreement, but the way they are implemented should be different from the treaty's verification regime, which reflects the realities of the 1980s.

Russian President Vladimir Putin complained last year about what he called a "stagnation in the area of disarmament," blaming the Bush administration, which has been accused of walking away from international treaties.

"We propose to our American partners that we launch negotiations to replace the START I," Mr. Putin said in June. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said last month that President Bush and Mr. Putin agreed during the Group of Eight summit in St. Petersburg in July to "start a specific discussion about the fate of our strategic stability treaties."

"We need a subject-specific discussion about how these lethal weapons can be contained on the basis of mutual trust and a balance of forces and interests," Mr. Lavrov told the newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta.

"We don't want a discussion reduced to the idea that, since we are no longer opponents, there is no need for us to restrain each other," he said. "That's not the right approach. Actually, it carries the risk of generating the same old arms race, since neither of us is likely to want to lag behind too much."

Russian officials said that Mr. Joseph resisted expert-level talks and preferred "strategic political discussions."

Mr. Joseph, who resigned last month, said he wanted to "get the policy framework right" so the experts know the objective of their negotiations. He noted that there was little contention as those decisions were being made within the Bush administration and expressed certainty that the U.S. position on the issue will not change.

U.S. and Russian officials said that Mr. Joseph and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak decided to hold an expert-level session this month during their last meetings in late January and early February.

START I, signed by President George Bush in 1991, obliged Moscow and Washington to cut their deployed strategic nuclear forces of about 10,000 warheads apiece down to 6,000 each. The treaty can be extended, but either side must notify the other one year before it expires on Dec. 5, 2009.

START II, which was negotiated in 1993, never entered into force because the U.S. Senate and the Russian parliament ratified two different versions. Moscow repudiated the accord a day after the June 13, 2002, U.S. withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) that banned strategic missile defense systems. To replace the ABM, the current Bush administration negotiated SORT, which obligated the United States and Russia to reduce their deployed offensive nuclear forces to 1,700 to 2,200 strategic warheads each by Dec. 31, 2012, when the accord expires.

Mr. Kimball said 2,200 warheads are "well beyond our defense requirements."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070306-122217-7850r.htm>

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Baltimore Sun

March 6, 2007

Iran's Space Program Raises Fears Of Missiles

By Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran--Iran's announcement that it launched a research rocket has called new attention to a space program that Tehran says is peaceful but that some fear aims to produce long-range ballistic missiles that could reach Europe or the U.S.

Exactly what Iran launched, or even what it aimed to do, remains the subject of debate, speculation and possible misinterpretation. But there are parallels to the controversy over its nuclear program.

Some experts say that in both cases, what Iran says is a peaceful program could mask or be turned into a weapons program. And in both cases, Iran's actual capabilities and the speed at which they are improving remain largely unknown.

"Initially, it seemed like a cover story for an unsuccessful satellite attempt," said John Pike of GlobalSecurity.org, referring to Iran's announcement Feb. 25 that it had sent a suborbital research rocket soaring to the edge of space. Conflicting statements by Iranian officials about how high the rocket traveled reinforced that idea. The United States has not commented officially.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack would not discuss details of U.S. intelligence on the launch, but he said the United States remained troubled by Iran's activities.

"We do have outstanding concerns about Iran's missile program, and we are very much concerned about the possible nexus between that program and their nuclear ambitions," he told reporters.

A satellite launch had been expected since the magazine Aviation Week reported comments by a top Iranian lawmaker, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, in January that Iran had assembled a space launch vehicle that would lift off soon.

An SLV is any type of rocket used to launch a spacecraft or satellite into orbit.

Experts say there is little difference between the technology needed to construct an SLV and that needed to produce intercontinental ballistic missiles that can carry warheads.

Given such similarities, some in Israel have expressed grave concerns. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after Iran's suborbital rocket announcement: "Once they have that capability, whether for satellites or anything else, once you can boost your way up there, then you're en route to ICBMs, and that's where they're headed."

Others say Iran is far from such a goal.

Iran is known to possess a medium-range ballistic missile known as the Shahab-3 with a range of at least 800 miles, capable of striking Israel. In 2005, Iranian officials said they had improved the range of the Shahab-3 to 1,200 miles. Experts also believe Iran is developing the Shahab-4 missile, thought to have a range of 1,200 to 1,900 miles, which would enable it to hit much of Europe.

Analysts believe both missiles are based on North Korean prototypes and suspect Iran has received ballistic missile assistance from Russia and China, too.

Iran initially acknowledged in 1999 it was developing the Shahab-4 but said it would be used only as a space launch vehicle for commercial satellites.

In 2003, Tehran declared it had ended the Shahab-4 program. But Western intelligence agencies doubt this. "We know there is a missile that seems to be significantly bigger than the Shahab-3," said John Sheldon of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Ala.

At the same time, Iran has made no secret of major ambitions for its space program. In 2005, the government said it had allocated \$500 million for space projects in the next five years. Also in 2005, Iran launched its first commercial satellite, Sina-1, into orbit from a Russian rocket.

On Feb. 24, Defense Minister Mostafa Najjar confirmed that Iran is constructing its own satellites and the rockets to launch them.

Iran says it wants to put its own satellites into orbit to monitor natural disasters in the earthquake-prone nation and to improve its telecommunications.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/bal-te.iran06mar06,0,331326.story?coll=bal-nationworld-headlines>

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New York Times

March 6, 2007

Pg. 11

U.N. Development Agency Suspends Its Work In North Korea

By Warren Hoge

UNITED NATIONS, March 5 — The United Nations Development Program announced Monday that it was suspending work in North Korea because the country had failed to meet conditions set up in response to American complaints that United Nations money was being diverted to the government of Kim Jong-il.

“We have decided to suspend our operations, and the ball is really now in the court of the D.P.R. Korean authorities,” said David Morrison, director of communications for the agency, referring to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the country’s official name.

The decision, which curtails 20 programs with a budget of \$4.4 million, was made Friday, a day after Pak Gil-yon, the North Korean ambassador to the United Nations, met with Ad Melkert, the development program’s associate director, to say that his country would not agree to new conditions for assistance.

Those conditions were that the United Nations would stop furnishing payments in hard currency to the government, local vendors and individuals, and stop making in-country hirings subject to government approval.

The demands, with a March 1 deadline, were imposed by the development program’s executive board on Jan. 25 after the United States mission charged that the United Nations program had been “systematically perverted for the benefit of the Kim Jong-il regime rather than the people of North Korea.”

Mr. Morrison said there was no connection between the announcement and the beginning on Monday, at the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in New York, of two days of talks between North Korea, represented by Kim Kye-gwan, and the United States, represented by Christopher R. Hill, the assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, on the North Korean nuclear program.

“The timing was driven by our undertaking as made explicit in the board decision of the 25th of January to only continue our operations in the D.P.R.K. if certain conditions were met by March 1, which was Thursday,” he said.

The development program also said in January that it was narrowing its program to what Mr. Morrison said were “activities designed more directly to benefit the North Korean people rather than to build capacity of the North Korean government.”

Mr. Morrison said the North Koreans responded that this action “represented a politicization of the foreign assistance process.”

He added that a decision on whether to end the work of the eight international staff members and 15 Koreans involved would be made within two or three days.

In a letter to Ambassador Pak on Friday, the program’s administrator, Kemal Dervis, said, “Should circumstances change at a later date, we would be willing to reconsider this position.”

The program’s Web site lists agricultural recovery, productivity and rural energy as developmental activities in North Korea.

Mr. Morrison said aid would continue under two other United Nations organs, the World Food Program and Unicef, the children’s agency.

In the aftermath of the American charges in January, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon ordered a full external audit of United Nations operations in North Korea, beginning with the development program.

“As far as I know, this will not affect the investigation,” Michelle Montas, Mr. Ban’s spokeswoman, said Monday.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/06/world/asia/06korea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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New York Times

March 7, 2007

U.S. Presses North Korea Over Uranium

By Warren Hoge

The United States said yesterday that North Korea must fully disclose its efforts to produce highly enriched uranium as part of the negotiations now under way that are aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program and normalizing relations between the two countries.

"They need to come clean on it, explain what they have been doing, why they have been doing it, and ultimately they would need to abandon it," said Christopher R. Hill, the chief United States negotiator.

Mr. Hill made the remarks to a morning gathering at the Japan Society in New York prior to entering his second day of talks with Kim Kye-gwan, his North Korean counterpart. In a late afternoon briefing after the talks concluded, Mr. Hill said they had been "very good, very businesslike, very comprehensive."

The talks are the first product of a Feb. 13 agreement reached in Beijing in which the government of Kim Jong-il said it would stop, seal and ultimately disable its nuclear facilities in exchange for fuel and other assistance.

While the accord specified that North Korea was required to make a full "declaration" of all of its nuclear activities, the question of the uranium enrichment program in particular arose yesterday because of recent suggestions that the Bush administration may have overstated the reliability of intelligence on the progress that North Korea might have made in enriching uranium.

Last October, North Korea tested its first nuclear device, a weapon made with plutonium. The United States says it believes that North Korea has also been working to develop a device using highly enriched uranium, and it points to the purchase of expensive equipment designed for that purpose that North Korea has made from Pakistan. But recently, government officials said they were no longer as confident that the North built on that purchase and had a uranium program.

Despite the recent doubts about the progress of the program, Mr. Hill said the United States was "owed a pretty clear answer" on why the purchase from Pakistan were made. "It is not unusual for a country going nuclear to go nuclear on two tracks."

The Feb. 13 accord has come under criticism from American conservatives like John R. Bolton, a former United Nations ambassador, who argue that it rewards North Korea by promising the delivery of fuel and assistance before the country's nuclear capacity is dismantled.

In defending the agreement, Mr. Hill noted that it had been criticized from both the right and the left in the United States for the same reason — that it was no improvement over a 1994 accord known as the Agreed Framework, which was struck by President Clinton, broken by North Korea and later dismissed by President Bush as a mistake. But Mr. Hill said the new agreement was not just a bilateral accord but one that was endorsed by China and other major countries in Asia. He also noted that it set up working groups with strict deadlines that are to take up issues that go beyond energy.

The working groups, which are meeting in New York and in Beijing this month, will also explore economic assistance for North Korea and a security agreement to cover all of Northeast Asia, Mr. Hill said.

The Feb. 13 accord specifies a 60-day deadline for shutting down Yongbyon, North Korea's main nuclear complex north of the capital, Pyongyang, and allowing inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, back into the country.

Steps to be taken after the 60 days focus on the challenge of getting North Korea to agree to disabling nuclear facilities and verifying the amount of plutonium remaining in the country. "We want to make sure that when the North Koreans give us a declaration, there are no surprises and no omissions," he said.

A meeting was set for March 19 of the six parties that participated in hammering out the recent agreement — North and South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States — to review progress. A mid-April gathering of the countries' foreign ministers will assess progress after 60 days.

Mr. Hill said that in a visit to Washington last week he met with Republican and Democratic senators about the agreement and had received "a great deal of support, enormous support."

But he added, "If we start missing deadlines and things start going badly, some of that support will peel off."

Asked if he feared that North Korea was playing for time and waiting for a more hospitable government in Washington after the next election, he said, "They understand that things aren't going to get better in the next two years." No administration, he said, could ignore the spread of nuclear weapons.

He said he had assured North Korea that the United States was committed to negotiations that would eventually lead to diplomatic relations between the two countries. "I also reaffirmed to them the need for them to fulfill their part of the bargain, which is complete denuclearization," he said.

"To me it makes a lot of sense," he said. "I look at the road that North Korea is on today, and I don't see much future for it on this road."

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/07/world/asia/07korea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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New York Post

March 7, 2007

Iran 'Defector'

Top nuke gen. flees to U.S.: report

By Niles Lathem and Oron Dan

Iran's former deputy defense minister secretly defected to the United States last month and brought military secrets to the West, it was reported yesterday.

Ali Reza Asghari was not abducted - a claim that Iran is making - but instead sought asylum in America, senior Iranian sources told an influential Arab-language paper.

U.S. officials denied the report.

If he did defect, Asghari, 63, could provide a treasure trove of secrets about Iran's nuclear plans and its ties to Shiite militants in Iraq and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon.

The retired general in the elite Revolutionary Guards vanished shortly after arriving in Istanbul on a private visit Feb. 7.

Israeli intelligence officials, who deny any involvement, said whatever happened to him must have been well planned in advance, with the cooperation of Turkish security.

His disappearance remained a secret until last weekend. Yesterday, Iran broke its silence.

The London-based newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat quoted senior Iranian sources as saying Asghari is headed for the United States "along with the secrets he carried."

But Iran claimed that Asghari didn't leave voluntarily.

"It is likely that Asghari has been abducted by the Western intelligence services," Iranian Gen. Esmail Ahmadi Moghaddam said.

Iranian officials said they were sending a delegation to Turkey to help with the investigation. Turkish officials said they had no information on Asghari's fate.

But Turkish media suggested he defected, apparently with the help of two foreigners who arranged for his hotel room.

The newspaper Milliyet added that Turkish intelligence officials believe Asghari opposed the fanatically anti-American government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and had valuable secrets about Tehran's nuclear plans. Menashe Amir, an Israeli analyst of Iranian affairs, said it appeared Asghari's "wife and children managed to leave Iran before his disappearance."

But a U.S. intelligence official insisted Asghari was not in the United States or headed here.

"We don't have him," the source told The Post.

Britain's Daily Telegraph suggested Israel's Mossad agents had abducted Asghari in an effort to solve another mystery, the fate of Israeli airman Ron Arad.

Arad was captured by Hezbollah after bailing out over southern Lebanon in 1986 and reportedly was transferred to Iran. Asghari was a key liaison between Iran and Hezbollah at the time.

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