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Articles & Other Documents:

[Russia Losing Patience With Iran Over Its Nuclear Stance](#)

['Dirty Bomb' Security Faulted](#)

[Nuclear Nonproliferation: Focusing on the Highest Priority Radiological Sources Could Improve DOE's Efforts to Secure Sources in Foreign Countries \(GAO Report\)](#)

[U.S. Ends Bank Probe; Possible Step Toward N. Korean Reactor Closure](#)

[Blair Wins Vote To Renew Atom Arsenal](#)

[New Sanctions On Iran Expected](#)

[DHS considers nuclear detector tests in New York](#)

[Kurds Mark 1988 Attack](#)

[Iran's President Vows To Keep Nuclear Project](#)

[Chlorine Blasts Kill 8; 6 Troops Also Die In Iraq](#)

[Suicide Bombers Using Chlorine Gas Kill 2 And Sicken Hundreds In Western Iraq](#)

[Smallpox Shot Infects Soldier's Toddler Son](#)

[Bush Urged To Develop Overall Nuclear Arms Policy](#)

[N. Korea Again Links Assets To Nuclear Deal](#)

[Iran Army Vows To Defend Nuclear Program](#)

[1987 Chemical Attack Still Haunts Iran](#)

[Nation, U.S. Test Missile Defense](#)

[Animals: The World's Best \(and Cheapest\) Biosensors](#)

[Navy adds to the list of those in Pacific who must get anthrax vaccinations](#)

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Los Angeles Times
March 13, 2007

Russia Losing Patience With Iran Over Its Nuclear Stance

Moscow will delay the start-up of a reactor it's building for Tehran. Money is just one issue.

By David Holley, Times Staff Writer

MOSCOW — Russia signaled sharp dissatisfaction Monday with Iran's defiant stance on nuclear issues, saying the start-up of a Russian-built nuclear reactor will be delayed and warning that Moscow will not join Tehran "in anti-American games."

Atomstroyexport, the state-run company building Iran's first nuclear power plant, said the supply of fuel to the nearly completed Bushehr facility would not begin this month as planned because of unresolved disputes over financing. The scheduled September launch of the reactor will also be delayed, it said.

Meanwhile, an official described as "an insider" told the three main Russian news agencies that Tehran had abused its ties with Moscow on the nuclear issue.

Iran's defiance of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, has caused Russia to suffer "losses in relation to its foreign policy and image, but they insist on their line," the Itar-Tass agency quoted the unnamed official as saying.

"Iran with a nuclear bomb or a potential for its creation is impermissible for us," the official said. "We will not play with them in anti-American games.... The Iranians are abusing our constructive attitude and have done nothing to help us convince our colleagues of Tehran's consistency."

Andrei Kortunov, president of the New Eurasia Foundation, a Moscow think tank, said the statement clearly was "an organized leak" designed to be "an unofficial official reprimand" to Iran.

"It is a serious public warning to Iran's leadership," Kortunov said. "This is a serious sign that Iran may eventually find itself in international isolation." The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the U.S. — have been considering a resolution aimed at tightening sanctions against Iran for its refusal to stop its uranium enrichment program. Tehran says the program is intended only to make fuel for civilian energy production; Washington charges that the effort is aimed at producing nuclear weapons.

Moscow has sought to continue working with Iran on the \$1-billion Bushehr plant while urging it to cooperate with the IAEA to reassure the world that its nuclear program is peaceful.

But in recent weeks, negotiations over payment for Russia's work have turned acrimonious. Talks in Moscow last week ended without agreement. Further talks were scheduled for this week in Tehran.

A spokesman for Atomstroyexport was quoted by state-run Russian news agency RIA Novosti on Monday as saying the supply of nuclear fuel for Bushehr would not begin this month because Iran had refused to sign documents on resuming payments for the project. Russia says Iran has failed to make agreed-upon payments of \$25 million a month. Iran says it has met its financial obligations.

"Today we are facing an unprecedented attitude on the part of the Iranian side to the Bushehr project, which was until recently considered the flagship of Russian-Iranian cooperation," the company spokesman said.

In Tehran, Kazem Jalali, an Iranian lawmaker, sharply criticized delays in the project and said Iranian-Russian relations could suffer.

"Any procrastination and delay in construction and delivery of the Bushehr power plant can reverse the balance in favor of those not calling for ties with Russia," the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency quoted him as saying. Some Iranian leaders think that Russia is not a trusted partner and that the delays are the result of pressure from world powers, Jalali said.

Ivan Safranchuk, director of the Moscow office of the Washington-based Center for Defense Information, said Russia was "taking advantage of the technical problems with Iran to send a political message."

"Iran is on the verge of severing relations with the IAEA, and Russia is clearly warning against such a dangerous step," Safranchuk said. "It is clear that no one — even Russia — will supply nuclear fuel to Iran once it breaks relations with the IAEA."

"Iran has been playing games with the U.S., Europe and Russia for a long time now, trying to take advantage of their mutual differences, but Russia is now making it clear to Iran that there is a limit to such manipulation," Safranchuk said.

Kortunov said Moscow's tougher attitude toward Iran was also prompted by a desire to avoid further damage to Russian-U.S. relations, which have deteriorated in the last few years.

"Russia can't afford to spoil relations with the United States any more deeply and doesn't intend to continue to irritate Washington over Iran," he said.

Times staff writer Sergei L. Loiko contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-russiran13mar13,1,997176.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

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

Philadelphia Inquirer

March 14, 2007

'Dirty Bomb' Security Faulted

WASHINGTON - The Energy Department has not done enough in Russia and in developing countries to secure radioactive material that could be used to make a so-called dirty bomb, congressional investigators said yesterday. A report by the Government Accountability Office said that during the last four years security has been improved at hundreds of sites containing radioactive material in 40 countries but that "many of the highest-risk and most dangerous sources still remained unsecured."

The GAO said the government had spent \$108 million since 2002 on securing such material - some of it abandoned, lost, or in poorly guarded waste sites.

- AP

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/16899197.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Nuclear Nonproliferation: Focusing on the Highest Priority Radiological Sources Could Improve DOE's Efforts to Secure Sources in Foreign Countries.

by Gene Aloise, director, natural resources and environment, before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. GAO-07-580T, March 13.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-580T>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d07580thigh.pdf>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 15, 2007

Pg. 16

U.S. Ends Bank Probe; Possible Step Toward N. Korean Reactor Closure

By Glenn Kessler and Edward Cody, Washington Post Staff Writers

The Treasury Department said yesterday that it has ended its investigation of a Macau bank that it accused of facilitating money laundering and counterfeiting by North Korea, removing a possible roadblock to a six-nation agreement to shut down the reclusive nation's nuclear reactor.

The Bush administration had pledged to end the case against Banco Delta Asia -- a case that complicated negotiations on North Korea's nuclear programs -- within 30 days of the Feb. 13 agreement on the nuclear program. But it is unclear whether the Treasury action, which formally ordered U.S. banks to stop doing business with Banco Delta Asia because of its dealings with North Korean entities, will satisfy North Korean demands for a halt to what Pyongyang has labeled "financial sanctions."

The Treasury announcement came hours after the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency made his first visit to Pyongyang since the crisis over North Korea's nuclear ambitions began in 2002. Mohamed ElBaradei, speaking in Beijing after his visit, said that North Korean officials told him they will begin shutting down their main nuclear reactor only after the United States lifts financial restrictions against North Korea.

He said officials there made it clear they were still willing to carry out the commitment to close the facility, a plutonium-based reactor at Yongbyon, near Pyongyang. But he said they also stressed that the United States must first fulfill its promise to cancel measures that froze about \$25 million in North Korean-linked accounts at Banco Delta Asia.

The Treasury action clears the way for Macau banking authorities to release money that was not traced to illicit activities, which U.S. officials said could be as much as half of the frozen funds. But Treasury officials used tough language to describe the bank, saying that what they had discovered fully justified their concerns about its dealings with North Korea.

Stuart Levey, undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, told reporters that Treasury had uncovered "systemic failures by Banco Delta Asia to apply appropriate standards and due diligence" and a "gamut of illicit activities that the bank facilitated on behalf of North Korean-related clients."

The Banco Delta Asia case, while involving a relatively small amount of money, has loomed large in the long-stalled nuclear negotiations. Treasury first warned U.S. banks about dealing with the bank four days before negotiations were concluded on Sept. 19, 2005, on a broad agreement to end North Korea's nuclear programs. The announcement nearly toppled the Macau bank, persuading banks around the world to limit financial transactions with North Korea. Pyongyang, in turn, walked away from the talks and escalated tensions across Asia by conducting its first nuclear test five months ago.

Now U.S. officials and Asian diplomats are bracing for North Korea's reaction. The mercurial government could declare victory and accept the Treasury decision or could say the move is inadequate. But analysts said it is more likely Pyongyang will bide its time, waiting to see whether the U.S. action continues to affect North Korea's banking relationships around the world.

"The North Koreans have the upper hand, and they know that," said Charles L. "Jack" Pritchard, a former State Department negotiator with North Korea who is now president of the Korean Economic Institute in Washington. "They can ride this as long as they want to," he said, adding that if the "chilling effect" of the Banco Delta Asia decision continues, "the North Koreans are not going to be pleased."

Levey said Treasury could end the prohibition on U.S. banks dealing with BDA one day if the bank is "brought under the long-term control of responsible management and ownership."

In the Feb. 13 accord -- a milestone in the long-stalled six-nation negotiations -- North Korea agreed to shut down and "seal" the Yongbyon reactor within 60 days as a first step toward dismantling the nuclear weapons program and disclosing the range of its nuclear research activities. Under the agreement, the IAEA, a U.N. branch based in Vienna, was assigned to inspect North Korea's nuclear facilities.

In return, North Korea was to receive a first shipment of fuel oil, part of a package of economic aid linked to further steps in doing away with the nuclear weapons program and submitting to inspection.

ElBaradei, seeking to renew contacts cut off by North Korea in 2002, said his one day of talks with senior North Korean officials allowed him to "clear the air" and open the door for cooperation in policing the agreement and for North Korea's eventual return to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

At a news conference, ElBaradei said he met with the head of North Korea's atomic energy agency, Ri Je Son, and other senior officials. The chief North Korean nuclear negotiator, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, was said to be sick and unable to see him, ElBaradei said. The talks were preliminary, ElBaradei stressed, and part of what he outlined as a long process of renewed cooperation that would be "better for North Korea, better for the world."

Cody reported from Beijing.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/14/AR2007031402299.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

March 15, 2007

Blair Wins Vote To Renew Atom Arsenal

By Alan Cowell

LONDON, March 14 — Struggling with a restive Labor Party in his final months of power, Prime Minister Tony Blair faced down a significant mutiny in Parliament on Wednesday, winning a vote to renew Britain's nuclear deterrent only with the support of opposition lawmakers.

But the vote raised a broader issue for some in Parliament, and outside, who questioned how Britain could press for nuclear nonproliferation, particularly in Iran and North Korea, if it was planning to spend \$40 billion to create a new generation of nuclear submarines to carry American-supplied Trident missiles.

Before the vote, three lawmakers who are low-ranking ministerial aides from the Labor Party quit their jobs to protest the renewal and one of them, Nigel Griffiths, said, "We must lead the world in campaigning for the eradication of the nuclear threat and we must lead by example."

About 90 Labor legislators — a quarter of Labor's lawmakers — rebelled against the government's plan to renew the submarine program.

Speaking in Parliament before the vote, Mr. Blair said, "I believe it is important that we recognize that although it is impossible to predict the future, the one thing that is certain is the uncertainty of it."

"For that reason, I think it is sensible we take this decision today," he added.

He contended that Britain would undermine its ability to press for disarmament if it scrapped its nuclear arsenal — the smallest among the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. "There is absolutely no evidence whatever that if Britain now renounced its independent nuclear deterrent that would improve the prospects of getting multilateral disarmament," he said. "I think the reverse is the case."

Traditionally, Labor has displayed a deep vein of antiwar and antinuclear sentiment and was formally committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament for many years.

Hundreds of people protested outside Parliament as lawmakers voted. On the London subway on Wednesday, antinuclear protesters handed out leaflets while wearing T-shirts proclaiming, "Tony loves W.M.D.," the initials for weapons of mass destruction. Some church leaders joined a demonstration at a naval base in Scotland, where the Vanguard-class submarines that carry the nuclear missiles are based.

"In my judgment the U.K.'s continued possession of nuclear weapons is no longer simply maintaining the 'balance of terror,' but fueling the development of new nuclear weapons systems around the world," Patrick O'Donoghue, the Roman Catholic bishop of Lancaster, said in a statement.

The foreign secretary, Margaret Beckett, told lawmakers before Wednesday's vote that Britain would cut its arsenal of nuclear weapons by 20 percent this year, to fewer than 160, which would be a 75 percent reduction since the end of the cold war. Britain's four Vanguard-class submarines each carry 16 American-supplied Trident long-range missiles with British nuclear warheads. They are supposed to maintain permanent patrols around the globe. Both Mr. Blair and his likely successor, Gordon Brown, say Britain should embark on building a second generation of submarines because the present vessels will go out of service by 2024 and it will take 17 years to design and build replacements.

The Labor Party has a majority of over 60 among the 646 members of the lower House of Commons.

Mr. Blair has faced rebellions in the past, notably among the nearly 140 Labor lawmakers who opposed the invasion of Iraq. He won that vote in March 2003, when the opposition Conservatives voted in favor of the invasion. But he lost a vote on an antiterrorism measure in November 2005 — the first such defeat since Labor won power in 1997.

In Wednesday's ballot, legislators cast votes for two measures. The first, which the government opposed, said that there was no need yet to decide on the renewal of the nuclear deterrent. Mr. Blair won defeat of that motion, 413 to 167, with others absent or abstaining, meaning that roughly 90 Labor legislators had broken ranks with his party, some had abstained and many of the almost 200 Conservatives had voted with Labor.

The second was a straight vote on whether the nuclear submarine fleet should be renewed. Mr. Blair won that vote by 409 to 161, with a rebellion of around 85 Labor legislators.

Earlier the Conservative opposition leader, David Cameron, pledged to support the government in renewing the submarine program — a policy the Conservatives have long supported. By depicting Mr. Blair as reliant on Conservatives, the opposition seeks to highlight what it calls weakness on the part of Mr. Blair.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/15/world/europe/15britain.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

March 15, 2007

New Sanctions On Iran Expected

By Times Wire Reports

U.N. ambassadors from six world powers agreed in principle on a proposed new package of sanctions against Iran and were expected to introduce a resolution to the Security Council today if their governments approve it, acting U.S. Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff said.

In December, the Security Council voted unanimously to impose limited sanctions against Iran for its refusal to freeze uranium enrichment. Iran says it wants to make fuel for power plants, but the West suspects it wants to build nuclear arms.

Iran sped up the enrichment, so the council began considering further sanctions.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-briefs15.5mar15.1.6824008.story>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

GovExec.com

DAILY BRIEFING

March 15, 2007

DHS considers nuclear detector tests in New York

By Jon Fox, Global Security Newswire

The Homeland Security Department is scheduled to decide this week whether to formally begin testing next-generation radiation detectors at a sea cargo terminal in New York City.

Following approval to begin testing at the New York Container Terminal on Staten Island, the portal machines would be put in place for about four weeks -- enough time to send 10,000 shipping containers through them, said Vayl Oxford, head of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office. The new technology would operate alongside the current detectors and DHS officials would evaluate the rate of false alarms.

Even as the detection office prepares to put the new machines through real-world paces, doubts persist in Congress about the value of the new technology.

Congress has blocked any additional funding for the new detectors until the homeland security secretary could assure Congress of the efficacy of the detectors. It is all part of a push and pull the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office is in the middle of on Capitol Hill, Oxford said.

"We find ourselves in an interesting tug of war," he told reporters. "There's this 'Do it faster.' And in the other case 'Slow down and make sure you do it right.'"

The Advanced Spectroscopic Portal monitors are designed to detect radiation and identify the source material. That would allow screeners to determine if the radiation source is the potassium in a shipment of bananas or the radiation emitted by a material of concern such as uranium or plutonium. The large number of secondary inspections currently required would be reduced, Oxford said.

The technology presently in place throws up the same red flag for all radiation regardless if it comes from natural sources or a radiological "dirty bomb." Discriminating between the two requires secondary screening with handheld detectors.

Lawmakers and the Government Accountability Office, however, have questioned the \$377,000 price tag for each machine, which is more than four times the cost Homeland Security cites for the cargo screeners now in use. There are plans to spend \$1.2 billion on the new detectors.

"DNDO's cost-benefit analysis does not provide a sound analytical basis for its decision to purchase and deploy the new portal monitors," Gene Aloise, a GAO expert on nuclear issues, told a House Homeland Security technology subcommittee Wednesday. "The data used in the analysis was incomplete and unreliable, and as a result we do not have any confidence in it."

Aloise said the detection office assumed the portals would identify highly enriched uranium 95 percent of the time, when in reality the number was much lower. Tests conducted in 2005 indicated the three types of radiation monitors selected could only correctly identify highly enriched uranium about half the time.

DHS analysis also used skewed data on the current technology's performance that made the second-generation machine look better by comparison, he said.

"We're a fact-based organization, and we believe cost-benefit analyses ought to be based on fact," Aloise told the committee.

Oxford said that 95 percent is an ideal goal for HEU identification. He expressed confidence that the next-generation screeners would reduce false alarms and alleviate pressure on Customs and Border Protection agents forced to conduct secondary inspections to determine sources of radiation.

http://govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=36384&dcn=todaysnews

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

March 17, 2007

Kurds Mark 1988 Attack

By Associated Press

HALABJA, IRAQ — Traffic stopped and people stood silent in the rain Friday as Kurds in northern Iraq commemorated the anniversary of a 1988 attack with nerve and mustard gas that killed an estimated 5,000 people. Saddam Hussein ordered the attack as part of a scorched-earth campaign to crush a Kurdish rebellion in the north, which was seen as aiding Iran in the final months of a war between Iraq and its neighbor. Hussein was executed last year for other crimes before he could face trial over the killings in Halabja.

Hundreds of victims' relatives and local officials also gathered in the city hall in Halabja, 150 miles northeast of Baghdad, and lighted 19 candles to symbolize the 19 years since the massacre.

"Each year on this day, I remember the vicious attack," said Tuba Abid, who lost 22 relatives.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-chemical17mar17,1,4633806.story>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times
March 17, 2007
Pg. 6

Iran's President Vows To Keep Nuclear Project

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, March 16 — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad vowed Friday that Iran would never dismantle its nuclear program, even in the face of toughened sanctions from the United Nations Security Council.

In a speech in the city of Tabas, he repeated Iran's oft-stated position that it was entitled under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to pursue a peaceful nuclear program. "The Iranian people insist on their right," the ISNA news agency reported him as saying.

Addressing himself to the members of the United Nations Security Council, he warned, "If you want to preserve your dignity in the international community you should change your behavior, because it will increase the revolutionary anger of the Iranian nation."

Germany and the five permanent members of the Security Council — Britain, France, China, Russia and the United States — agreed Thursday to a draft resolution that, if adopted by the Security Council, would impose tougher sanctions on Iran for its refusal to suspend its uranium enrichment program.

The United States and some Western governments accuse Iran of pursuing a secret weapons program, but Iran contends that it is merely producing fuel for nuclear reactors.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has asked to take part in a Security Council meeting to defend Iran's right to its uranium enrichment program, and the United States State Department said Friday that it would act quickly to accommodate the request.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said in his speech in Tabas, a remote desert city in north-central Iran, that the five permanent members of the Security Council were worried more about Iran's economic progress than about any nuclear threat.

"They have never been worried about bombs or weapons because there are many countries that have nuclear warehouses," he said. "The reality is that they are afraid of the progress of our nations," he added.

In London, Iran's ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency criticized Britain's plans to renew its submarine-based nuclear arsenal while it is asking Iran and North Korea to give up their nuclear programs.

"Britain does not have the right to question others when they are not complying with their obligations" under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, said the ambassador, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Reuters reported.

"It is very unfortunate that the U.K., which is always calling for nonproliferation, not only has not given up the weapons but has taken a serious step towards further development of nuclear weapons," he added.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/17/world/middleeast/17tehran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post
March 18, 2007
Pg. 20

Chlorine Blasts Kill 8; 6 Troops Also Die In Iraq

By Karin Brulliard, Washington Post Staff Writer

BAGHDAD, March 17 -- Three trucks rigged with chlorine and explosives blew up in the Sunni insurgent center of Anbar province Friday, killing at least eight people and sickening hundreds, U.S. and Iraqi officials said Saturday.

The U.S. military also reported the deaths of six American soldiers in other attacks.

The chlorine bombs -- two near Fallujah and one near Ramadi -- left at least 350 people and seven U.S. soldiers ill from exposure to the chemical, the military said. At least eight people were killed in the Fallujah bombings, including two policemen, said Sadoun Abdul Karim, an official with the Ministry of Interior.

Militant groups have shifted the nature and locales of their attacks as the United States and Iraq deploy additional troops to suppress violence in Baghdad under a month-old security plan.

While no insurgents asserted responsibility for Friday's bombings, an American military spokesman in Baghdad said the chlorine blasts bore the hallmark of the Sunni extremist group al-Qaeda in Iraq, which has fought U.S. and Iraqi forces for control of Anbar province.

"We have seen al-Qaeda in Iraq use this type of tactic to scare the population and use it as a terror weapon," said the spokesman, Lt. Col. Christopher C. Garver.

Shiite militias, once seen by the U.S. military as the biggest threat to Iraq's stability, have stood down as the security plan has been implemented, but Sunni insurgents have asserted themselves. They have taken responsibility in the past two months for devastating car bombings in Baghdad and the downing of six U.S. helicopters.

Recently, insurgents also have targeted Sunni tribal sheiks in Anbar who have cooperated with the Americans. One of the Friday blasts outside Fallujah struck near the home of Khamis al-Hasnawi, a tribal leader who instructed his followers to join the Iraqi police and military in fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq, said Hatam Muhammad, his nephew. At least three of his family members were killed; Hasnawi was unhurt, Muhammad said.

"These explosions show the rest of the Iraqis that Sunnis are being targeted. Criminality is in their blood," said Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi, a sheik who has led a U.S.-backed effort to bring together tribes opposed to al-Qaeda in Iraq. "Their techniques are changing continuously, but we will exterminate them totally by our brave men."

The first blast occurred Friday afternoon when a suicide bomber detonated a pickup truck carrying chlorine near a Ramadi checkpoint, wounding one U.S. soldier and one Iraqi civilian.

Just over two hours later, a bomber detonated a dump truck 10 miles south of Fallujah, killing two Iraqi policemen and causing as many as 100 residents to seek treatment for skin and lung irritation and vomiting, the military said.

Thirty-seven minutes later and a few miles away, a suicide attacker detonated a dump truck carrying a 200-gallon chlorine tank strapped with explosives, sickening about 250 people.

Last month, two chlorine truck bombs in Baghdad killed at least 16 people. Five suicide bombings have involved chlorine in Anbar province since late January, the U.S. military said.

Chlorine causes wheezing, coughing and skin irritation and can be fatal in heavy concentrations. While chlorine bombs here have done little damage compared with traditional bombs, which often kill scores of people at once, the use of chemicals carries sinister symbolism in Iraq, where President Saddam Hussein's forces killed rebellious Kurds and others with poisonous gas.

Also Saturday, a bomb killed four U.S. soldiers and wounded one as they patrolled an area in western Baghdad, the military said. Another soldier was shot and wounded immediately after the blast.

A U.S. soldier was fatally shot during operations in Baqubah, north of Baghdad, the military said. And another soldier was killed and three were wounded Friday when a bomb exploded as they patrolled south of Baghdad, the military said Saturday.

The U.S. military said it detained 18 suspected militants, including possible members of al-Qaeda in Iraq, in raids Saturday in Fallujah and Balad, north of Baghdad.

Roadside bombs killed at least five people and wounded at least 17 across Iraq on Saturday, said Col. Sami Hassan of the Interior Ministry. At least five officers were killed and seven others wounded in four bombings in Baghdad, the northern town of Mosul and Diyala province.

Another policeman was killed when a suicide car bomb detonated at a checkpoint outside the fortified Green Zone in Baghdad; the blast also killed one civilian and wounded another, a national police spokesman said.

No violence was reported in Baghdad's sprawling Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City, where thousands protested Friday at the urging of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who called on them to "resist" the U.S. presence in Iraq.

While Sadr continues to cooperate warily with the Baghdad security plan, Amar al-Hakim -- the son of one of Iraq's most powerful Shiite clerics and top Sadr rival -- said at a Najaf rally Saturday that the U.S. military infringes on Iraq's sovereignty, the Reuters news agency reported. Hakim's father, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, heads the dominant political party in Iraq's parliament and met with President Bush in Washington in December.

Special correspondents Waleed Saffar and Salih Dehema in Baghdad and other Washington Post staff in Iraq contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/17/AR2007031700432.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

March 18, 2007

Pg. 16

Suicide Bombers Using Chlorine Gas Kill 2 And Sicken Hundreds In Western Iraq

By Kirk Semple

BAGHDAD, Sunday, March 18 — Three suicide bombers driving trucks loaded with explosives and tanks of chlorine gas detonated their payloads in Anbar Province on Friday, killing at least two Iraqi police officers and wounding or sickening more than 350 people, the American military command said Saturday.

Police and hospital officials, however, said that as many as eight people had been killed.

Insurgents began combining explosives with chlorine gas and other chemicals in January in an effort to sow more fear and havoc among civilians, military officials say.

Some local officials blamed militants linked to the insurgent group Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia for the attacks Friday and said they were part of a campaign to intimidate moderate tribes that have declared their opposition to such fundamentalist insurgent groups.

“The escalation in attacks by Al Qaeda against the tribes is a reaction to the organization of the tribes against them,” said Muhammad Hussein, a businessman in Anbar and a leader of the Abu Issa tribe.

The first attack was at 4:11 p.m. Friday, when a pickup truck carrying chlorine gas blew up near a checkpoint northeast of Ramadi, the provincial capital, wounding an American service member and an Iraqi civilian, a statement from the military said. The statement did not say if the wounds were inflicted by the gas, shrapnel or another cause.

About two and a half hours later, a dump truck filled with chlorine gas exploded outside the town of Amiriya, south of Falluja, killing two police officers, according to the American authorities, citing local police officials. As many as 100 civilians were exposed to the chlorine and were treated for ailments including skin and lung irritation as well as vomiting, the military said.

But the Iraqi authorities released a higher death toll. Six people were killed, including a policeman, according to Abdul Rahman Muhammad, an Amiriya police officer, and a doctor at Falluja Hospital who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak on the record.

A third suicide bomber, driving a dump truck containing a 200-gallon chlorine tank, detonated about 37 minutes later near the town of Abu Issa, south of Falluja, the Americans said. About 250 civilians were exposed to the gas in that blast. Eleven were evacuated to American military medical centers.

Mr. Muhammad of the Amiriya police said two civilians were killed in the explosion and six wounded.

On Saturday, Iraqi security forces captured Abu Qutada al-Palestinei, the deputy of Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the leader of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, according to a senior official in the office of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki.

Mr. Palestinei was arrested in Baghdad, said the official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the issue.

The American military command said Saturday that a soldier was killed on Friday and three others were wounded when a bomb concealed in a roadway was detonated as soldiers were patrolling on foot south of Baghdad.

Early Sunday, the American military announced that four American soldiers were killed on Saturday and one was wounded in the explosion of a bomb planted in a road in western Baghdad where the soldiers were patrolling. After the blast, a gunman opened fire on the soldiers and wounded one, the military said.

The command also announced that an American soldier died Saturday afternoon after being shot while on patrol in Baquba, in Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad, where Sunni and Shiite militants are battling.

In Baghdad on Saturday, a suicide car bomber detonated his payload near a police checkpoint in the western Harithiya neighborhood, killing two people, including a police officer, and wounding five people, an Interior Ministry official said.

Gunmen killed two police officers in the southwest Baghdad neighborhood of Baya on Saturday, the official added.

A bomb blast in the Khudra district of Baghdad killed a civilian, and a mortar attack on a public market in the Madaen district south of Baghdad killed two civilians and wounded 15, the ministry official said.

A Sunni mosque in Dora, one of the capital’s most violent neighborhoods, was partly destroyed in a bombing on Saturday, according to the Interior Ministry, and the authorities found at least 19 bodies that had been dumped around the capital.

In Hilla, south of the capital, a bomb apparently aimed at the convoy of a top police commander killed one police officer on Saturday, according to officials at the Hilla hospital and the provincial governor’s office. The commander, Col. Abbas al-Jibouri of the paramilitary police unit known as the Scorpion Brigade, escaped unharmed, the officials said.

Gunmen killed three civilians on Saturday near Khan Bani Saad in Diyala Province, a police official in Baquba said. Gunmen also shot and killed a civilian, he added.

Also on Saturday, American military doctors set up a mobile medical clinic in the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City as part of the American-Iraqi military push into the sprawling, working-class district.

Qais Mizher contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Iraqi employees of The New York Times from Baghdad, Hilla and Falluja.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/world/middleeast/18iraq.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Smallpox Shot Infects Soldier's Toddler Son

Boy critically ill; mom also stricken

By Jeremy Manier, Tribune staff reporter

In the first case of its kind in years, a 2-year-old boy is being treated in Chicago for a rare and life-threatening infection that he contracted from his father, a U.S. Army soldier recently vaccinated against smallpox.

The Indiana boy is in critical condition with eczema vaccinatum, an unusual side effect of the smallpox vaccine that can affect people who receive the shot or their close contacts.

Doctors also said the boy appears to have passed the infection to his mother, who has a much milder case of the virus in the smallpox vaccine, which is also called vaccinia. The virus is not smallpox, though it is similar enough to offer protection from that deadly disease, which was declared eradicated in 1980.

The mother and child are being treated at the University of Chicago's Comer Children's Hospital, which withheld their names at the family's request. There is no infection risk for the general population, government officials say, since the vaccine virus can spread only through close physical contact.

But the boy's diagnosis last week has prompted a frenzy of activity and daily conference calls involving the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the state and city public health departments. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave emergency authorization for the hospital to treat the boy with ST-246, an experimental drug for smallpox that is untried as a therapy in humans.

The smallpox vaccine fell out of general use in the 1970s, but the case could be a lesson for the U.S. military, which has vaccinated 1.2 million personnel against smallpox since 2002 amid fears of bioterrorism.

It's unclear why the father was allowed to have contact with his son, who had a history of eczema, shortly after the vaccination. The skin condition is a well-known risk factor for eczema vaccinatum, and official guidelines warn that people with eczema should avoid contact with vaccinees.

"We are looking into how this could have happened," said U.S. Army spokesman Paul Boyce.

Officials say the general population could receive smallpox vaccinations in the event of a bioterrorist attack or other unforeseen exposure. For that reason, experts want to study the Indiana family to learn more about treatment and transmission of the vaccinia infection.

"There certainly are also conceivable insights into smallpox infection," said Dr. Inger Damon, chief of the CDC's poxvirus and rabies branch. Damon has been involved in the daily conference calls on the boy's treatment.

Experts said they knew of no cases of eczema vaccinatum since at least 1990, when the military last had a program of smallpox vaccination.

The vaccinia virus in modern smallpox vaccines is closely related to an older form of vaccinia called cowpox, the disease English doctor Edward Jenner used in the late 1700s to develop early methods of vaccination.

Jenner relied on the observation that milkmaids who had cowpox seemed to be protected from later smallpox infection. He found that patients inoculated with material from cowpox sores also got protection from smallpox.

That history is why the word vaccine stems from the Latin word for cow.

Vaccinia was modified from its original form over the years but remains an infectious agent with the potential for side effects.

The father of the Indiana boy received the vaccine in late January before a planned military deployment. The Army delayed his departure and permitted him to visit his family in mid-February.

Two weeks later, a rash broke out on the boy's skin. He came to the U. of C. on March 3 after being transferred from St. Catherine's Hospital in East Chicago. Doctors first identified his widespread rash as a different form of eczema, but it worsened in his first few days at the U. of C.

His mother developed sores after she and her son arrived at the Chicago hospital. Doctors believe she contracted the disease from the boy because of their lengthy close contact.

A pediatric dermatologist, Dr. Sarah Stein, noticed the boy's lesions had changed to look like round blisters with a dimple in the middle--a potential sign of vaccinia infection. The medical team took scrapings from the lesions, which they analyzed and sent to the Illinois Department of Public Health's Chicago office for further testing.

Rapid tests by the state and further tests at the CDC confirmed the boy had the vaccinia virus, officials at those agencies said. The hospital also sent the CDC photos of the boy's lesions.

The hospital already was using infection precautions with the boy, but staffers then added such measures as gloves and face masks. They also placed the boy in a room with negative pressure so the air would always blow inward, keeping the virus inside.

The boy's rash had spread to cover 80 percent of his body, said Dr. Madelyn Kahana, chief of pediatric intensive care medicine at the U. of C. He was going into sepsis, a devastating, systemwide infection rarely seen with viral cases.

"In the later stages of [eczema vaccinatum], it can look like smallpox," said Damon of the CDC.

The boy needed a ventilator to help his breathing because of the powerful pain medication he needed for the lesions.

The boy received the primary treatment for eczema vaccinatum, a drug called vaccinia immune globulin, or VIG. The drug came from a stockpile the CDC keeps in case widespread vaccination ever becomes necessary. He also got an antiviral drug called cidofovir and the experimental drug ST-246, which has been shown to protect laboratory animals from exposure to smallpox. The drug recently entered preliminary human trials but had never been used in a sick patient.

U. of C. officials said the boy has shown signs of improvement since hitting a low point last weekend. His mother's health was never in serious danger, but she has remained in his hospital room to keep others from being exposed. Health officials in Chicago and Indiana have tracked all of the family's contacts and found no additional cases so far. Kahana said the boy probably will lose 20 percent of his outer skin layer, but she hopes he will recover without the need for skin grafts. She believes the case should be a lesson to the military, which must educate service members about the risks of the vaccines it requires them to take.

"I think the information simply wasn't disseminated properly or impressed in a manner that was understood," Kahana said, "because I don't think anyone would knowingly expose their child to this."

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/health/chi-0703170122mar17.1.7253688.story>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 18, 2007

Pg. 5

Bush Urged To Develop Overall Nuclear Arms Policy

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

A prestigious scientific committee made up of retired nuclear weapons lab directors and former Defense and Energy department officials is recommending that, before the United States moves ahead on the development of new nuclear warheads, the Bush administration should develop a bipartisan policy regarding the size of the future stockpile, testing and nonproliferation.

The committee's report, which is due out next month, comes at a time when the Bush administration is asking Congress to approve \$88 million for cost and engineering plans that could lead to a decision next year for production of a new Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) for the nation's current submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile.

The panel will recommend that "any decision to proceed with RRW must be coupled with a transparent administration policy on nuclear weapons, including comments concerning stockpile size, nuclear testing and nonproliferation," according to an interim progress report from the committee chaired by C. Bruce Tarter, the former director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The panel was formed under the auspices of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

The panel includes John S. Foster Jr., another former Livermore director; Siegfried S. Hecker, who ran Los Alamos National Laboratory; Richard L. Wagner Jr., a Los Alamos veteran and a member of the Defense Science Board; and Charles B. Curtis, former deputy secretary of energy and currently president of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. In presenting the interim report to an AAAS meeting last month, Tarter said the panel found there has been no Bush administration statements dealing with nuclear weapons since the Nuclear Posture Review in December 2001. In addition, he said, "There have been no public policy statements that articulate the role of nuclear weapons in a post-Cold War and post-9/11 world and lay out the stockpile needs for the future."

Based on open and classified briefings from current officials at the Pentagon, the weapons labs and National Nuclear Security Administration, the panel believes that the RRW program should not move ahead without getting bipartisan agreement on the Complex 2030 plan, the costly modernization of the nation's nuclear weapons complex, and the future of the program now underway to refurbish the currently deployed nuclear weapons stockpile.

Rep. Ellen O. Tauscher (D-Calif.), who chairs the House Armed Services strategic forces subcommittee, has in the past sought funds to carry out the comprehensive nuclear policy study that the AAAS panel has recommended. "We have pieces and programs, calls for designs and weapons that don't track back to a policy that everyone understands," she said in a recent interview.

"There are a growing number of voices that have credibility that are saying we have a disjointed set of programs that don't lead to a cogent nuclear policy for the 21st century," she said, pointing to an article last January by Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz, former secretaries of State; former defense secretary William J. Perry and former senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.).

In it they called on the Bush administration to take the lead in reversing reliance on nuclear weapons through various measures, including ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; taking nuclear weapons off alert; further reducing the number of the weapons themselves; and halting production of fissile materials.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/17/AR2007031701372.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 18, 2007

Pg. 21

N. Korea Again Links Assets To Nuclear Deal

By Maureen Fan, Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, March 17 -- North Korea will not stop its nuclear activity until all of its money frozen in a Macau bank has been released, the lead North Korean negotiator said as he arrived in Beijing for disarmament talks.

The comments from Kim Gye Gwan, the North Korean vice foreign minister, came just before the chief U.S. negotiator, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill, briefed a North Korean delegation in Beijing on the matter. Meanwhile, U.S. Treasury officials met with monetary authorities in Macau to discuss Banco Delta Asia, which has been accused of laundering illicit money from North Korea.

Negotiations aimed at shutting down North Korea's reactor at Yongbyon are set to resume Monday. The four-year-old talks were blocked for more than a year because North Korea insisted on resolving the Banco Delta Asia matter before discussing any nuclear issues.

While U.S. officials have said previously that as much as a third of the \$25 million would be unfrozen, Hill on Saturday said only that he did not believe the bank issue was a problem with respect to the talks.

"I think we would expect money to be moving very quickly in terms of completing this case and finally resolving it," Hill said. "I think we have a way forward, which we briefed them on, which I think should meet their needs."

The U.S. Treasury on Wednesday formally ordered U.S. banks to stop doing business with the bank, saying it laundered money for North Korea and "turned a blind eye to illicit activity." China said through a Foreign Ministry spokesman that it "deeply regretted" the move, which essentially cripples the bank.

Peter M. Beck, a Seoul-based analyst with the International Crisis Group, said the situation remained murky.

"It's really not clear if the Treasury and State departments are on the same page yet," Beck said, "and it's not clear what the North Koreans are willing to accept, if they're going to insist on the full amount as they said today, or get roughly half back and declare victory."

Meanwhile, North Korea said it had begun to make preparations to shut down the nuclear facility as part of a Feb. 13 agreement that was hailed as a milestone in the six-party talks, which involve North and South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the United States.

As part of the agreement, the United States pledged to resolve the bank dispute within 30 days, leading to the announcement this week that it had concluded its probe. In return, the North Koreans agreed to shut down its main nuclear facility within 60 days, or by mid-April, and seal it under monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The closure would trigger delivery of the first fuel oil that is a major component of promised economic aid for the energy-starved North Korea.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/17/AR2007031701115.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

March 18, 2007

Pg. 18

Iran Army Vows To Defend Nuclear Program

By Reuters

TEHRAN, March 17 — A senior Iranian army commander warned the United States and other Western powers not to make any "stupid move" over Tehran's nuclear program and said they would be surprised by the military response to any such action.

The comments by Maj. Gen. Ataollah Salehi, the commander in chief of the regular army, were reported by newspapers on Saturday and were the latest in a series of defiant statements by Iran's leadership as the United Nations prepares to vote on new sanctions against the country. He said Iran's military was much stronger today than when Iran fought a war against Iraq in the 1980s.

Iran is embroiled in an escalating international dispute over its uranium enrichment program, which Tehran says is solely for fuel for power generation. The West suspects the program is a cover for making nuclear weapons.

The United States says it would prefer a negotiated solution to the crisis but has not ruled out military options if diplomacy fails.

Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, said on Wednesday that his country would respond militarily if attacked.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/18/world/middleeast/18Iran.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

March 19, 2007

Pg. 1

1987 Chemical Attack Still Haunts Iran

Iraq's deadly assault on the town of Sardasht continues to color the debate about Tehran's defenses.

By Borzou Daragahi, Times Staff Writer

SARDASHT, IRAN — The roots of Iran's nuclear ambitions wind through this mountaintop town of pine trees and streams along the Iraqi border. Here, on a crystal-clear afternoon 20 years ago, Saddam Hussein's warplanes unleashed a poisonous rain of chemical weapons, killing as many as 113 civilians and injuring thousands more. The victims gasped and vomited on rusting buses as they were rushed to hospitals. They dropped dead on the cobbled streets of the town center. They cried out as their eyes burned and skin bubbled.

At the United Nations, Iran protested vehemently, to little avail, about the use of the weapons, which were banned under international treaties. The world's superpowers had little patience for complaints from the Islamic Republic, which supported attacks on U.S. Marines in Lebanon as well as on Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

Once the war ended, an indignant Iran stockpiled chemical weapons and embarked on a crash nuclear program that is now at the center of a global dispute.

"We should at least think about [weapons of mass destruction] for our own defense," Hashemi Rafsanjani, then speaker of Iran's parliament, said two months after the Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988. "Even if the use of such weapons is inhumane and illegal, the war has taught us that such laws are just drops of ink on paper."

For the West, Sardasht is a forgotten footnote in the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq. But to many Iranians, the stricken town looms large in the debate about the country's defenses.

"If Iran is developing nuclear weapons, this would derive directly from its experience in the Iran-Iraq war: the knowledge that Iraq would use whatever weapon against Iran and that the international community would close its eyes to it," said Joost Hiltermann, a Jordan-based researcher and author of the upcoming book "A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq and the Gassing of Halabja," about the use of chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war.

The attack and the worldwide lack of concern that followed haunt this Kurdish town.

"I always thought that it is necessary for the world to understand what occurred," said Mostafa Asadzadeh, who lost every member of his immediate family in the attack on Sardasht. "It was a gigantic crime."

Throughout the war, the U.S. contended that each country was using chemical weapons against the other. But a heavily redacted wartime U.S. government assessment details only examples of Iraqi use of weapons of mass destruction, including a chemical attack against Iraqi Kurds that is now the subject of a genocide trial in that country.

"Iraq appears to have become more competent in its capability to integrate chemicals into its conventional battle strategy," says the undated document, which was declassified in 1996 and is now posted on the website of the Federation of American Scientists. "As chemical weapons have become more available ... military leaders appear to have accepted them as a tactically useful and effective weapon."

Hussein invaded Iran on Sept. 22, 1980, lured by the prospects of seizing long-disputed oil-rich regions of Iran and beating back a new Shiite Muslim government in Tehran that vowed to spread its recent revolution across the region.

The Iraqi president, whose Sunni-dominated regime suppressed Iraq's Shiite majority, expected a quick victory. Instead, Iraq became bogged down as Iranians rallied behind Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Fighting a country nearly three times more populous than his and facing the prospect of losing the war, Hussein began using chemical weapons to fend off the swarms of fighters on the southern front around 1983. Though banned under international law since 1925, the weapons effectively stopped the juggernaut and killed an estimated 6,500 Iranians during the war.

"Nothing could have stopped us," said Shahriar Khateri, a Tehran physician and war veteran now recognized as his country's foremost authority on the effects of chemical weapons. "The only thing that broke our spirits were the chemical attacks."

First shells, then odors

Sardasht, a run-down but scenic town of 40,000 people, has changed little over 20 years. A single mountain pass along a perilous cliff road leads up into the town, 10 miles from the Iraqi border. Some homes are carved into the surrounding mountain walls. Evergreens and grassy fields coat the hilltops. Faded government propaganda along brick walls exhorts residents to pray. Men in traditional Kurdish baggy pants and cummerbunds walk through busy downtown Sarchawe Square.

It was about 4 p.m. on June 28, 1987, when Iraqi warplanes began circling the town and dropping bombs. Iraqis frequently strafed the town, which housed Iranian troops and was a suspected stronghold of Iraqi Kurdish insurgents. Eight bombs struck the city.

Residents thought little of the bombing. Then the odors came.

"It smelled of garlic and had the color of dried cement powder," said Mohsen Panahi, who devotes most of his time to bringing attention to Sardasht's victims. "Afterward it smelled of apple."

One of the shells had struck a paint store, and some thought the strange odors were coming from the shop. Instead of fleeing, many went to inspect the bomb damage.

"At first people did not take the attack seriously," said Hossein Mohammadian, president of the Organization for Defending the Victims of Chemical Weapons and a resident of Sardasht.

Experts believe the shells were loaded with mustard and possibly nerve gas agents.

Symptoms began within minutes — nausea and irritated eyes. "I wanted to vomit," Panahi said. "My eyes burned. They were very red."

The few doctors in town had no idea how to treat the patients' bizarre burns, bubbling skin and blindness. They scraped the crumpled skin off patients with razors. They tried to calm panicked patients with dwindling supplies of morphine.

Escape to higher ground

Parvin Karimvahed and her relatives crammed into three cars and fled for higher ground up a mountain road, rinsing their bodies and eyes whenever they reached rivers and streams. Her nephew's torso began reddening and blistering. Her sister began vomiting blood. Her uncle's wife, pregnant, moaned in agony.

She began to feel sick herself. "The burning feeling was horrible," she said.

Karimvahed eventually fell into a coma. She suffered burns on more than 85% of her body. When she was flown to Belgium for treatment, doctors were surprised that she had lived, and told her she would never have children.

But she had two sons, despite pains and burning that continue to run through her body and a badly damaged lung.

Blisters caused by mustard gas still break out on her breasts.

"I call Sardasht a lost island," she said. "The people are losing their families in front of their eyes like burning candles."

At the time of the attack, Iranian authorities kept relatively quiet, eager to keep up morale in a nation fighting an exhausting war that would ultimately prove unwinnable. They worried Iranians would abandon border towns for fear of further chemical attacks.

"They were worried it would cause a panic," Mohammadian said.

Still, word of the attack rippled across the country. Mostafa Asadzadeh, performing his military service in Tehran, was heading back to Sardasht for a visit when he received a call from the city of Tabriz. One of the shells had struck near his house, the caller said. His mother and father, the caller said, were recovering at the hospital there.

At least 700 crying patients crowded the hospital and its courtyard. By the time Asadzadeh got there, his parents had died. He found his 14-year-old brother, Hadi, wheezing and coughing with a tube in his throat.

"He couldn't speak," said Asadzadeh, calmly recalling his tale over tea and sweets at his family's two-story home in Sardasht. "I didn't know where my other siblings were."

He began visiting hospitals. At one, he was directed to a morgue, where he saw the body of his 19-year-old brother, Ali. He scoured the hospitals of northwestern Iran, eventually finding his grandmother and other brothers and sisters, all dead.

He borrowed a truck and moved the bodies to Sardasht.

Within four months, his brother Hadi's life had inched away too. Asadzadeh was alone, and began to lose his mind.

"I felt very lonely," he said. "I had hallucinations. I spoke aloud to my family."

Friends came to his aid and helped him climb out of despair. He married, had children and moved back into the house near the bomb site. Last year, he and workers began scraping the plaster off to repaint. Their eyes became red. They began to cough.

"You see, even 20 years later," he said, "they remain, the traces."

Victims' complaints

Sardasht's victims complain that the Tehran government has done little to help them or even publicize their plight. But the attack on the town continues to infuse Iran's rhetoric about its security policies. Iran's defense minister last year demanded that the U.S. pay Sardasht victims compensation as an "accomplice" in the attack.

"Why did the world remain silent after Saddam Hussein's regime dropped its chemical bombs on the defenseless people of Sardasht and Halabja and, against international treaties, cruelly targeted innocent people with his chemical weapons?" a 2005 editorial in the conservative daily Resalat said.

"The Sardasht attack had a profound psychological effect on Iranians," said one Iranian diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity, "and definitely colors the country's view of international law and the U.N. as a protector." By the mid-1990s, Iran acknowledged that it had developed a sizable chemical weapons stockpile. It also began aggressively pursuing nuclear energy technology. By 2002, it had become clear that the program was part of an effort to develop more advanced technologies that could potentially be used to make weapons-grade nuclear materials.

Although Iran insists it is developing nuclear technology only for peaceful purposes, some say the 1980s war experience convinced the country's leaders that they needed a deterrent against another Sardasht.

"Iran drew the conclusion that the only way to protect itself," Hiltermann said, "was to develop its own weapons of mass destruction."

Times staff writer Kim Murphy in Tehran contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-sardasht19mar19,0,1690460.story?coll=la-home-world>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

March 19, 2007

Israel

Nation, U.S. Test Missile Defense

By Times Wire Reports

Thousands of American and Israeli troops conducted an operation to test ways to intercept missiles able to carry nuclear, chemical and biological warheads, American and Israeli military officials said.

Israel and the U.S. are concerned that Iran could be developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that can reach Israel. But both sides said the operation in the Negev desert was unrelated to those fears.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-briefs19.5mar19,1,1183319.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists

14 March 2007

The Bulletin Online

Global Security News & Analysis

Animals: The World's Best (and Cheapest) Biosensors

By Laura H. Kahn

While policy makers fret over the obstacles in developing biosensor technology, the best and cheapest biosensors are already distributed globally but generally ignored: They're called animals. The United States has spent millions of dollars to develop biosensors that would detect bioterrorism or other deadly agents. But so far, the technology has not met expectations and questions have arisen as to whether additional spending is warranted for civilian applications. (See Steve Bunk's July 2002 *Scientist* article "Sensing Evil.")

The 2003 monkeypox outbreak in the Midwest was not detected until it appeared in humans. No one noticed the sick prairie dogs that shared housing with exotic African rodents. Fifteen prairie dogs became ill after a wholesale pet store sold approximately 100 of these animals. Of the 15 sick prairie dogs, 10 rapidly died. Only two were examined; the rest were destroyed. Only after 37 humans became ill was the cause of the outbreak identified.

In January 2007, the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine held a "One Medicine" colloquium to promote the link between human and animal health. The idea is not new. Such a concept was described and promoted in the landmark book *Veterinary Medicine and Human Health* in the 1980s by the late Calvin Schwabe, a veterinary epidemiologist and parasitologist. Schwabe's book proposed a unified human and veterinary approach against zoonotic diseases that built on the vision and principles initially advocated by German physician and pathologist Rudolf Virchow in the nineteenth century.

What is new is that the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine plans to establish a One Medicine Institute that would integrate education, research, and clinical applications involving human, veterinary, and ecological health as well as public health and epidemiology. The center would educate a new cadre of professionals

trained in these disciplines in order to meet the twenty-first century challenges of emerging zoonotic diseases and potential bioterrorism agents.

Historically, human and animal diseases have been treated as largely separate entities; physicians and veterinarians rarely communicate or collaborate. The ecology of microorganisms is generally not taught in medical schools, so medical students might not see the importance of animal health on human health. But the increasing number of zoonotic agents infecting human populations illustrates the importance of this issue.

Unlike most other institutions, the University of Illinois has an advantage in that its colleges of medicine and veterinary medicine share the same campus, which facilitates collaboration. Many universities have their veterinary college in a rural setting and their medical school in an urban setting. For example, Cornell University's veterinary college is in upstate New York, while its medical school is located in New York City. Under these circumstances, collaboration is difficult at best.

Another difficulty is that there are only 28 accredited schools of veterinary medicine in the United States compared to 125 accredited medical schools. The nearly 4.5-fold difference poses a further communication dilemma between the two disciplines. Globally, the discrepant ratio is about the same.

According to the Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research, there are more than 2,000 medical schools worldwide; in contrast, there are approximately 440 veterinary medical schools worldwide. The American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education lists only 12 accredited veterinary medical schools outside of the United States. The number of well-trained veterinarians available is arguably not enough to meet the global challenges of emerging zoonotic diseases. So what should these professionals do?

In her presentation at the colloquium, "Integrated Bio-Surveillance: It's Time We Stop Using Taxpayers as Sentinels," Tracey McNamara, a veterinary medical pathologist, described the challenges of utilizing animal species as sentinels for zoonotic threats. Many species (including dogs, cats, pet prairie dogs, zoo animals, and urban wildlife) fall below the radar of any federal agencies. No one is monitoring them even though they have proven to be of immense importance in the early detection of human disease outbreaks.

McNamara set up a national disease surveillance system in zoos because the exotic animals housed there have broad susceptibilities and zoos do active disease surveillance. She argued that zoo animals make good sentinels because they represent a stationary population, they are spread across the entire United States, and they are generally in close proximity to humans. Many of these animals are extremely valuable because they are often endangered species. Zoos also have veterinary medical expertise as well as diagnostic pathology and archival material of serum banks and tissue samples.

According to McNamara, this national zoo surveillance network detected positive West Nile virus cases several weeks before public health departments in three out of the four years of testing. At a time when most health departments were testing only crows, the surveillance network's testing expanded the species susceptibility list dramatically. For example, the network identified the first reptile with West Nile virus, along with a novel, but different, virus in crows that mimicked West Nile virus. In addition, because it could follow known individual animals over time, the surveillance network showed that exposed but asymptomatic birds and mammals could have significant neuropathology as a result of exposure to West Nile virus. (Besides zoo animals, nonagricultural wildlife are also an extremely important sentinel group for emerging zoonotic epidemics.)

From 2001 to 2004, Duane Gubler, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention laboratory in Fort Collins, Colorado, represented the major source of support for this network, which cost just \$300,000 during the four-year period. Sadly, once Gubler left his position, the funding ceased. According to McNamara, the network hasn't seen a dime since.

If we use weather forecasting as an analogy to zoonotic disease forecasting, the ability to accurately forecast weather changes did not happen until weather satellites were launched in the early 1960s. For the first time in history, scientists could track and follow storms such as hurricanes and warn populations to evacuate with a higher level of accuracy. (Whether they choose to heed these warnings or not is another matter).

Just as hurricanes are a part of life on this planet, so are infectious disease epidemics. We need to develop "biological" satellites that would identify epidemics at their earliest possible stages in order to prepare and warn populations. By necessity, these biological satellites would include close surveillance of nonagricultural wildlife and require a global cadre of well-educated veterinarians and others involved in ecological monitoring.

Those of us who are truly concerned about early identification of emerging infectious diseases and bioterrorism should promote and encourage the funding of programs such as the national zoo surveillance network and other programs that focus on the surveillance of nonagricultural species. Time and again, they've proven to be the best and cheapest environmental biosensors around.

<http://www.thebulletin.org/columns/laura-kahn/20070314.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Stars and Stripes
Pacific edition
Saturday, March 17, 2007

Navy adds to the list of those in Pacific who must get anthrax vaccinations

By Jeff Schogol

ARLINGTON, Va. — Sailors in Japan are again required to get mandatory anthrax vaccinations, the Navy has announced.

Sailors who previously received anthrax vaccine can elect to continue “to complete their initial series and/or receive their annual booster,” according to an e-mailed response to questions from the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

In a recent NAVADMIN (Navy Administrative Message), the Navy announced the following sailors and Marines will also have to get the anthrax shots: “U.S. Pacific Command forward deployed naval forces and III Marine Expeditionary Force assigned or designated as early deployers [up to 20 days after the start of the flow of forces] to the Korean peninsula.”

The Navy said the move would affect sailors on ships forward-deployed to Japan including:

- The aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk, with a crew of 3,000 sailors and an additional 2,000 air crew.
- The amphibious assault ship USS Essex, with a crew of 950 and the capacity to hold 1,073 troops
- The cruiser USS Shiloh, with a crew of 387.
- The destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur, with a crew of 303.

The move would not affect most sailors in Guam, said Navy spokeswoman Lt. Ligia Cohen.

“The sailors in Guam are not considered forward deployed except a few units with special missions,” Cohen said in a Thursday e-mail to Stars and Stripes.

The Marine Corps would not say Thursday how many Marines on Okinawa would have to get the anthrax regimen. Asked if all III MEF Marines would be required to get vaccinated for anthrax, a Corps official would only say the Corps plans to issue specific guidelines on the vaccination program in an upcoming Marine Administrative Message.

Last year, the Defense Department made anthrax vaccinations mandatory again for U.S. troops and some department civilians serving in the U.S. Central Command theater of operations and on the Korean peninsula.

The Defense Department began vaccinating troops against anthrax in 1998, but a federal judge stopped the program in 2004 after finding the Food and Drug Administration made mistakes in determining that the vaccine was safe. The judge allowed the Defense Department to administer the vaccinations on a voluntary basis beginning in 2005, but when only half of servicemembers decided to get vaccinated, the Defense Department made the vaccinations mandatory again for troops heading to the CENTCOM area of operations and Korea.

Adults who accompany troops and contractors to those regions can still receive the vaccinations on a voluntary basis, the NAVADMIN says.

The Navy can compel family members to get vaccinated in case of emergencies, according to BUMED.

“Under certain public health provisions and emergencies, the Navy can require individuals to receive a vaccine as a condition of remaining on a Navy installation or being allowed to enter or leave a Navy installation,” according to BUMED.

Pregnant women will only receive the vaccine in “unusual circumstances if the potential benefits of the vaccination outweigh the potential risks to the fetus,” the NAVADMIN says.

The NAVADMIN recommends asking women if they are pregnant or if there is a chance they could become pregnant during the next month before administering the shot. The query is a standard question posed to female servicemembers and civilians before they are vaccinated, not a way of asking if women are sexually active, according to BUMED.

“The question is necessary to inform women and providers of the possibility of becoming pregnant,” the BUMED statement says. “This offers a higher level of protection to the female and a potential fetus.”

For more information, see NAVADMIN 068/07 at: www.npc.navy.mil
<http://www.estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=43337&archive=true>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)