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Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

May 12, 2007

Iran Calls U.S. True Violator Of Nuclear Treaty

By Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Iran accused the United States of being the true violator of the Nonproliferation Treaty as a global conference ended Friday without managing to bridge conflicting priorities on how to tighten the pact meant to prevent the spread of nuclear arms.

The United States and the European Union, in turn, criticized Tehran for hamstringing the 106-nation meeting for a week by blocking consensus adoption of its agenda because of a phrase calling for the "need for full compliance" with the treaty. Diplomats accredited to the conference said Iran felt that wording would allow it to be targeted for its defiance of the U.N. Security Council.

Differences were deflected to the last minutes of the meeting by the failure of delegates Friday to adopt the Japanese "chairman's factual summary" — Yukiya Amano's review of the debates initiated and documents submitted at the 130-nation meeting since its opening April 30.

The document was to have been annexed to the meeting's concluding report. But opposition from nonaligned nations, which felt it did not reflect their priorities and from Tehran, which opposed mention of "serious concern ... expressed over Iran's nuclear program," led it to be listed only as one of dozens of documents submitted at the meeting.

Since the outset of the meeting, Iran has been a major issue, with Tehran defending its nuclear record and the United States and its allies accusing it of breaching the treaty.

The summary dedicated only one of its 59 paragraphs to Iran, noting that Tehran was urged to comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions calling for a halt of its uranium enrichment program. Still, that was too much for Iran. And while nonaligned delegates did not specify their opposition, several said the summary was "not factual enough."

That indicated they did not share the priorities of nuclear weapons states, whose main nonproliferation focus is tightening the rules on nuclear technology in an attempt to prevent non-weapons states from acquiring the capacity to make such arms.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/allheadlines/182653.php>

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Reuters

Fri May 11, 2007 1:22PM EDT

Iran, North Korea seek to boost cooperation

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran and North Korea have agreed to step up bilateral contacts, an Iranian news agency said on Friday, signaling closer ties between two countries which were part of U.S. President George W. Bush's "axis of evil".

Iran's Foreign Minister Manoucher Mottaki signed the agreement with visiting North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Yong-il on Thursday evening, the student news agency ISNA said.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's government "is interested in expanding ties with North Korea in the political, economical and cultural fields," Mottaki was quoted as saying.

"Therefore it is necessary to remove some barriers to provide and recognize new fields of cooperation," he said, suggesting North Korea's debt to Iran was one such barrier without giving details.

Under Thursday' accord, the foreign ministries of the two countries would every year send delegations to each other to "exchange ideas" over different international issues.

Bush branded the two countries as well as Iraq as part of an "axis of evil" after he took office in 2001.

Since then, Iran has defied Western pressure to suspend its nuclear program, which the West fears is aimed at making atom bombs, a charge Tehran denies.

North Korea drew international condemnation when it conducted its first nuclear test in October, but agreed in February this year to shut its nuclear facilities in return for energy aid.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSDAH13544420070511>

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Washington Times

May 12, 2007

Pg. 6

India

Nuke-Capable Missile Fired From Chandipur

NEW DELHI -- India test fired a medium-range nuclear-capable missile at midweek, a Defense Ministry official said. Last month, India successfully test fired Agni 3, a new missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads across much of Asia and the Middle East.

The surface-to-surface Prithvi, or Earth, missile, with a range of 95 miles, was fired on Wednesday from the test range in Chandipur in the eastern state of Orissa, the official said on the condition of anonymity. The area is 45 miles north of Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa state.

India and longtime rival Pakistan routinely test fire missiles. But they usually notify each other before missile launches in keeping with an agreement between the two nations. The Indian army already has adopted the Prithvi missile, which can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads, the official said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20070511-102737-3078r.htm>

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San Francisco Chronicle

May 11, 2007

Pg. 8

Contingencies For Nuclear Terrorist Attack

Government working up plan to prevent chaos in wake of bombing of major city

By James Sterngold, Chronicle Staff Writer

As concerns grow that terrorists might attack a major American city with a nuclear bomb, a high-level group of government and military officials has been quietly preparing an emergency survival program that would include the building of bomb shelters, steps to prevent panicked evacuations and the possible suspension of some civil liberties. Many experts say the likelihood of al Qaeda or some other terrorist group producing a working nuclear weapon with illicitly obtained weapons-grade fuel is not large, but such a strike would be far more lethal, frightening and disruptive than the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Not only could the numbers killed and wounded be far higher, but the explosion could, experts say, ignite widespread fires, shut down most transportation, halt much economic activity and cause a possible disintegration of government order.

The efforts to prepare a detailed blueprint for survival took a step forward last month when senior government and military officials and other experts, organized by a joint Stanford-Harvard program called the Preventive Defense Project, met behind closed doors in Washington for a day-long workshop.

The session, called "The Day After," was premised on the idea that efforts focusing on preventing such a strike were no longer enough, and that the prospect of a collapse of government order was so great if there were an attack that the country needed to begin preparing an emergency program.

One of the participants, retired Vice Adm. Roger Rufe, is a senior official at the Department of Homeland Security who is currently designing the government's nuclear attack response plan.

The organizers of the nonpartisan project, Stanford's William Perry, a secretary of defense in the Clinton administration, and Harvard's Ashton Carter, a senior Defense Department official during the Clinton years, assumed the detonation of a bomb similar in size to the weapon that destroyed Hiroshima in World War II. Such a weapon, with a force of around 10 to 15 kilotons, is small compared with most Cold War-era warheads, but is roughly the yield of a relatively simple bomb. That would be considerably more powerful and lethal than a so-called dirty bomb, which is a conventional explosive packed with some dangerous radioactive material that would be dispersed by the explosion.

The 41 participants -- including the directors of the country's two nuclear weapons laboratories, Homeland Security officials, a number of top military commanders and former government officials -- discussed how all levels of government ought to respond to protect the country from a second nuclear attack, to limit health problems from the radioactive fallout and to restore civil order. Comments inside the session were confidential, but a number of the participants described their views and the ideas exchanged.

A paper the organizers are writing, summarizing their recommendations, urges local governments and individuals to build underground bomb shelters, much as people did in the early days of the Cold War; encourages authorities who survive to prevent evacuation of at least some of the areas attacked for three days to avoid roadway paralysis and damage from exposure to radioactive fallout; and proposes suspending regulations on radiation exposure so that first responders would be able to act, even if that caused higher cancer rates.

"The public at large will expect that their government had thought through this possibility and to have planned for it," Carter said in an interview. "This kind of an event would be unprecedented. We have had glimpses of something like this with Hiroshima, and glimpses with 9/11 and with Katrina. But those are only glimpses."

Perhaps the most sobering issue discussed was the possibility of a chaotic, long-term crisis triggered by fears that the attackers might have more bombs. Such uncertainty could sow panic nationwide.

"If one bomb goes off, there are likely to be more to follow," Carter said. "This fact, that nuclear terrorism will appear as a syndrome rather than a single episode, has major consequences." It would, he added, require powerful government intervention to force people to do something many may resist -- staying put.

Fred Ikle, a former Defense Department official in the Reagan administration who authored a book last year urging attack preparation, "Annihilation from Within," said that the government should plan how it could restrict civil liberties and enforce a sort of martial law in the aftermath of a nuclear attack, but also have guidelines for how those liberties could be restored later.

That prospect underscored a central divide among participants at the recent meeting, several said.

Some participants argued that the federal government needs to educate first responders and other officials as quickly as possible on how to act even if transportation and communication systems break down, as seems likely, and if the government is unable to issue orders.

"There was a clear consensus that a nuclear bomb detonated in the United States or a friendly country would be an earth-shaking event, and we need to know how we will respond beforehand," said Ikle. "I wish we had started earlier, because this kind of planning can make an important difference."

But others said the meeting made it clear that the results of any attack would be so devastating and the turmoil so difficult to control, if not impossible, that the lesson should have been that the U.S. government needs to place a far greater emphasis on prevention.

"Your cities would empty and people would completely lose confidence in the ability of the government to protect them," said Steve Fetter, dean of the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland. "You'd have nothing that resembles our current social order. I'm not sure any preparation can be sufficient to deal with that."

Fetter added, "We have to hold current policymakers more responsible" for taking all out measures to prevent a nuclear attack.

Raymond Jeanloz, a nuclear weapons expert at UC Berkeley and a government adviser on nuclear issues, said that California might be better prepared than most states because of long-standing plans for dealing with earthquakes and other natural disasters. Those plans, he said, could be a useful model for first responders.

He added, as others did, that the dislocation and panic caused by a nuclear strike could make any responses unpredictable.

"The most difficult thing is the fear that this kind of planning, even talking about it, can cause," Jeanloz said.

Michael May, a former director of the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, defended the survival planning, saying that people should get used to the idea that such a crisis, while dire, could be managed -- a key step in restoring calm.

"You have to demystify the nuclear issue," said May, who now teaches at Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation. "By talking about this, you take away the feeling of helplessness."

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/05/11/MNG2OPP22R1.DTL&hw=Contingencies+For+Nuclear+Terrorist+Attack&sn=001&sc=1000>

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Washington Times

May 12, 2007

Pg. 11

Nuclear Khan Game To Reopen?

By Claude Salhani

The black-market nuclear network established by the father of Pakistan's nuclear program, A.Q. Khan, broken up in 2004, may be dormant but could resume operations in the future, according to a just-released report by the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The IISS study found no evidence to indicate that Pakistan sanctioned or encouraged the sales of nuclear technology and equipment to Iran, Libya and North Korea as a means to fund its own nuclear program.

The report by Mark Fitzpatrick, a former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation, found Khan ran a black-market operation beyond the reach of the Pakistani government. However, the truth behind Khan's activities is unlikely to ever be fully revealed. "Pakistan would never allow any foreign intelligence organization to question Dr. Khan," said Mr. Fitzpatrick.

He added that the CIA had some knowledge of Khan's proliferation activities while they were in progress, yet did not pay enough attention. "There's no doubt that the CIA knew about some of Khan's activities at various stages of his proliferation," Mr. Fitzpatrick told a group of journalists in Washington. "There's also no doubt that the CIA didn't give enough attention to this area of private sector proliferation in looking at Iran's nuclear development program over the years." The CIA, much like other Western intelligence services, was more focused on state-to-state activities rather than on individuals, like A.Q. Khan's network, he said.

Mr. Fitzpatrick, the lead author of a dossier revealing the activities of the A.Q. Khan network, said Khan's sales to Libya, for example, "were almost exclusively private business transactions, beyond state control." The centrifuges Khan's black-market operation sold to Libya were produced in Malaysia, Turkey, Europe and South Africa and shipped via Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, according to the report.

But given Pakistan's control over its nuclear technology it is hard to imagine Khan did not enjoy the protection, if not the outright support, of Pakistan's intelligence services -- the ISI -- known to be supportive of the Taliban in Afghanistan and other radical Islamist organizations, such as Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda.

However, Mr. Fitzpatrick's report identified some "gray areas." It remains questionable whether prior to September 11, 2001, Pakistan's government did not have knowledge of Khan's illicit activities or to what degree certain groups within the Pakistani government did not facilitate Khan's nuclear proliferation activities. Soon after the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, Washington communicated to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf -- in no uncertain terms -- to stop Pakistan's support of Islamist groups.

In an interview with Pakistan's Dawn newspaper, Mr. Fitzpatrick said former Pakistani army chief Gen. Aslam Beg "encouraged" the Khan network's sales to other countries. "Ego, money, nationalism and a sense of Islamic

fraternity" motivated Khan and his supporters to sell nuclear technology to other Muslim countries, he said. "Different motivations in different cases."

Mr. Fitzpatrick said in his report he did not think Pakistan sold its nuclear technology in order to raise money for its nuclear program.

Additionally, Mr. Fitzpatrick also found no link between Khan's network of nuclear proliferators and the terrorist group responsible for the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon just outside Washington.

Although Khan was removed from Pakistan's nuclear program in January 2004 and placed under house arrest by President Musharraf, he remains a very popular and revered figure in Pakistan. However, despite an official pardon from Mr. Musharraf, Khan remains under house arrest. After Khan's arrest, Washington declared the network had been shut down. But according to Mr. Fitzpatrick's report published by the IISS, it is believed some of Khan's associates have escaped law-enforcement attention and "may resume their black-market business."

According to Mr. Fitzpatrick, Khan established a procurement network to keep Pakistan's nuclear program operational. Mr. Fitzpatrick said the Khan network was made up of about 50 members that included operators from Dubai, Turkey, Malaysia, Switzerland and Germany, as well as from Pakistan.

Given strong demand for nuclear technology by governments and terrorist groups, there remains a distinct possibility of Khan reactivating his black-market network.

Claude Salhani is international editor for United Press International.

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20070511-084957-4577r.htm>

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Washington Times

May 13, 2007

Pg. B3

Nuclear Terror: How Real?

By Brian Michael Jenkins

Former CIA Director George Tenet writes in his new book his biggest fear is "the nuclear one." He writes that Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda "desperately want" to mount a nuclear terrorist attack because "they understand that... if they manage to set off a mushroom cloud, they will make history."

The history of nuclear terrorism can be summarized: There hasn't been any -- yet. But it remains a fantasy of terrorists seeking super-destructive power, and a nightmare for everyone else, with periodic reminders some day it may come true.

Al Qaeda certainly has nuclear ambitions, but is not believed to have nuclear capabilities at this time. But the absence of nuclear terrorism has not prevented nuclear terror. Such is the power of language, that the mere placement of the words "nuclear" and "terrorism" in close proximity produces a fission of fear.

The possibility someone outside government might build a nuclear weapon was contemplated at the very beginning of the atomic age in the 1940s. Nuclear terrorism plots drove suspense novels written in the 1950s and '60s, like James Bond creator Ian Fleming's "Thunderball." Today, it is "24" character Jack Bauer who chases terrorists with nuclear bombs.

But what about reality? I presented my first paper on nuclear terrorism at a conference in Los Alamos, N.M., in 1975. The title: "Will Terrorists Go Nuclear?" We still ask that question 32 years later.

The debate in the 1970s focused on whether terrorists could build a bomb even if they had the material. Bomb designers tended to argue the principles of nuclear weapons design were by then well known, and therefore terrorists probably would be able to fabricate a crude nuclear weapon. But bomb builders remained skeptical: Building a nuclear bomb involved more than equations on paper.

Having no expertise in design of nuclear weapons, I took a different tack, looking at terrorist motives and intentions. While nuclear terrorism seemed theoretically attractive, even those we labeled terrorists did not do everything they could have done just a few decades ago.

Technological limitations and operational difficulties aside, terrorists seemed to operate within self-imposed constraints in the 1970s. They worried that large-scale indiscriminate violence might tarnish their image, threaten the cohesion of their groups, alienate their perceived constituents, and provoke a backlash that would threaten their survival. But these constraints were not universal or immutable and changed over time.

Beginning in the 1980s, the constraints began to erode and large-scale terrorist violence increased. By the 1990s, my colleagues at the Rand Corp. were writing about the "new terrorism," referring to terrorists increasingly motivated by religious fanaticism and determined to kill in quantity and likely to seek weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to expand their capacity for mayhem.

Perceptions of the likely terrorist scenario also changed. Prompted by the prevalence of terrorist hostage-taking in the 1970s, analysts scaled up contemporary scenarios and wondered whether terrorists with nuclear weapons might some day hold cities hostage to extort political concessions. At least some terrorists apparently thought along the same lines. This later changed to fears that if terrorists acquired WMD they would attack without warning. The fall of the Soviet Union and growing concerns about the security of its huge nuclear arsenal deepened fears of nuclear terrorism. Exploratory discussions about how the United States and the Soviet Union might generally cooperate against terrorism, which began in the 1980s, developed into concrete programs aimed at securing Russian weapons and finding employment for Russian weapons designers.

The end of the Cold War also required a thorough rethinking of American national security policy. Two threats dominated attention: escalating terrorism and the proliferation of WMD. The two were easily conflated. Analysts feared that hostile states with nuclear weapons might be tempted to arm terrorists with one. Even without state approval, rogue elements involved in these programs might, for financial gain or ideological reasons, facilitate terrorist acquisition.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks redefined plausibility. Terrorist scenarios previously considered far-fetched suddenly became operative presumptions. Facing the reality of large-scale death and destruction, could America afford to take the chance terrorists might attack again, causing even greater devastation?

The subsequent "global war on terror" (the terms "terror" and "terrorism" initially were used interchangeably) would include not only a campaign against those responsible for September 11, but also a campaign against hostile states suspected of pursuing nuclear weapons. Pre-emption became national policy. Suspicion sufficed and the U.S. invaded Iraq to destroy WMD that turned out not to exist.

There is less uncertainty about North Korea's nuclear arsenal, since the North has already tested a nuclear weapon. There is enough suspicion about Iran's nuclear intentions to fear Iran and North Korea, even if they don't launch suicidal nuclear attacks, will clandestinely provide terrorists with nuclear weapons. If dismantling these programs proves impossible, the world is confronted with the unattractive alternatives of another pre-emptive military attack or accepting the risk.

Some analysts have suggested instead that deterrence strategies, which worked during the Cold War, might be modified and applied to new nuclear weapons states -- even to terrorists themselves. But this idea tends to be rejected in official circles from fear deterrence implies acceptance of nuclear weapons and therefore undercuts current efforts aimed at their elimination.

Whether nuclear terrorism will be avoided or is only a matter of time remains in the realm of speculation. Nonetheless, it will continue to be a source of public apprehension and a factor confronting governments around the world.

Brian Michael Jenkins is a terrorism expert at the Rand Corp., a nonprofit research organization.

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20070512-102004-1533r.htm>

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Washington Post

May 14, 2007

Pg. 3

Many Lessons In Disaster Drill

Emergency Preparedness Improves, but Gaps Are Evident

By Ann Scott Tyson, Washington Post Staff Writer

BUTLERVILLE, Ind. -- "Okay, roll him over," a National Guard rescue worker tells his team, treating a bloodied, unconscious role-player pulled from the dust and rubble of a collapsed building in southern Indiana.

"One, two, three -- lift!" the guardsman says as the team carries the mock victim to a decontamination tent -- a little like a human carwash -- where the injured are rolled on stretchers through sprinklers that remove radioactive residue.

A 10-kiloton nuclear bomb has just detonated in greater Indianapolis, killing 14,000 people, injuring 21,000 and overwhelming local responders as part of the largest and most complex military and civilian training exercise of its kind. And so, thousands of local, state and national forces -- including more than 2,000 National Guard members and 1,200 active-duty troops from U.S. Northern Command -- are taking part in the 11-day exercise this week.

Other parts of the exercise include a simulated major hurricane in the Northeast and multiple terrorist attacks on military installations and infrastructure in Alaska.

"This may well be the most demanding scenario our nation faces," said Gen. Victor E. Renuart Jr., head of Northern Command, after surveying the emergency work on Saturday at a 1,000-acre training facility south of Indianapolis.

"An event of this size would overwhelm any state."

Nearly two years after Hurricane Katrina exposed gaps in the country's ability to respond to a large-scale domestic crisis, the exercise is showing important advances in the ability of responders to coordinate their efforts and put specialized lifesaving skills to work.

Yet the preplanned scenario, designed to push the U.S. response system to the breaking point, has also highlighted ongoing shortcomings in the government's ability to handle the aftermath of such a crisis.

Nationwide, for example, the Army National Guard has only half the equipment it needs to respond to crises at home -- from terrorist attacks to natural disasters. That includes 38 percent of trucks, 27 percent of helicopters and other aircraft, and 46 percent of communications gear, according to Guard data. Such gaps can delay critical help by days, leading to higher death tolls, said Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum, head of the National Guard Bureau.

"This is something that we've never seen -- a horrific attack," said Maj. Gen. R. Martin Umbarger, adjutant general of the Indiana National Guard, which in the scenario mobilized its 13,500 available members. "We are all realizing that what we just went through is very probable for the nation."

At the sprawling Muscatatuck Urban Training Center outside Butlerville, some emergency responders ran mobile command centers and communications networks in trucks and tents. Others rescued victims from buildings.

In one tent, Capt. Kevin Jones of the Kentucky Guard manned a satellite communications network able to patch together radio systems used by local police, firefighters and the military -- a critical function absent during Katrina. Twenty-five such teams exist nationwide, with one planned for each of the states. "We can allow anyone to communicate with anyone," said Jones, whose team has had its equipment less than a year.

Nearby, other specialized Guard response teams performed difficult rescues, including rappelling off a building with a patient in a stretcher and removing the injured from a collapsed building. Since 2004, the Guard has established 17 response forces, with about 180 members each, to react within hours to chemical, biological or nuclear incidents.

"We want to see where this is going to break," said Air National Guard Lt. Col. Kim Sencindiver, who trains the 45-person medical teams that are part of each response force. "These guys have been out here three days -- they're tired."

The exercise showed new response capabilities, but it also revealed ongoing problems: radios and phones that malfunctioned, too few aircraft and slow reaction times.

"We have to get some of our federal partners plugged in earlier," said Earl Morgan, director of public safety for Indianapolis. "We need radiological experts in our back pocket."

Early decisions by the governor on whether to evacuate residents or shelter them in place had to be reversed hours later when expert advice became available, he said. "That harms the public confidence."

Many participants had days or weeks of notice for the exercise, which limited the ability to test response times required in a real attack. Many National Guard units arrived within four hours of the bombing and federal help arrived in seven or eight hours, Morgan said.

Indiana's Army National Guard, which has only 23 percent of its transportation equipment and 31 percent of its aviation gear on hand, had to call on the active-duty military for helicopters and transport planes. It also required help from units in Ohio, Illinois and other states. Such state-to-state borrowing helps fill gaps but also can delay by three or four days responses to unanticipated disasters and attacks, officials said.

"A slower reaction time equals lives saved or lost," Blum said. A nuclear incident would exacerbate shortages because gear and personnel would have to be frequently rotated and decontaminated, and would also require the labor-intensive removal of contaminated remains, he said.

The National Guard needs an additional \$14 billion beyond what is now budgeted to replenish equipment, Blum said, adding that Congress and Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates have signaled they are considering new funding. In terms of personnel, Indiana has most of its Guard members available now, but will deploy 4,000 troops to Iraq over the next seven months, Umbarger said. The National Guard, which today has nearly 55,000 troops deployed overseas and mobilized for fires, floods and other duty in 25 states, will increase its role in Iraq and Afghanistan in coming months to relieve active-duty troops.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/13/AR2007051301134.html>

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New York Times

May 15, 2007

Pg. 1

Inspectors Cite Big Gain By Iran On Nuclear Fuel

By David E. Sanger

VIENNA, May 14 — Inspectors for the International Atomic Energy Agency have concluded that Iran appears to have solved most of its technological problems and is now beginning to enrich uranium on a far larger scale than before, according to the agency's top officials.

The findings may change the calculus of diplomacy in Europe and in Washington, which has aimed to force a suspension of Iran's enrichment activities in large part to prevent it from learning how to produce weapons-grade material.

In a short-notice inspection of Iran's main nuclear facility at Natanz on Sunday, conducted in advance of a report to the United Nations Security Council due early next week, the inspectors found that Iranian engineers were already using roughly 1,300 centrifuges and were producing fuel suitable for nuclear reactors, according to diplomats and nuclear experts here. Until recently, the Iranians were having difficulty keeping the delicate centrifuges spinning at the tremendous speeds necessary to make nuclear fuel, and often were running them empty, or not at all.

Now, those roadblocks appear to have been surmounted. "We believe they pretty much have the knowledge about how to enrich," said Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the energy agency, who clashed with the Bush administration four years ago when he declared that there was no evidence that Iraq had resumed its nuclear program. "From now on, it is simply a question of perfecting that knowledge. People will not like to hear it, but that's a fact."

It is unclear whether Iran can sustain its recent progress. Major setbacks are common in uranium enrichment, and experts say it is entirely possible that miscalculation, equipment failures or sabotage could prevent the Iranian government from reaching its goal of producing fuel on what President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad boasts is "an industrial scale."

The material produced so far would have to undergo further enrichment before it could be transformed into bomb-grade material, and to accomplish that Iran would probably have to evict the I.A.E.A. inspectors, as North Korea did four years ago.

Even then it is unclear whether the Iranians would have the technology to produce a weapon small enough to fit atop their missiles, a significant engineering challenge.

Iran says its nuclear program is intended to produce energy, not weapons.

While the United Nations Security Council has passed a resolution demanding that Iran suspend all of its nuclear activities, and twice imposed sanctions for its refusal to do so, some European nations, and particularly Russia, have questioned whether the demand for suspension still makes sense.

The logic of demanding suspension was that it would delay the day that Iran gained the knowledge to produce its own nuclear fuel, what the Israelis used to refer to as "the point of no return." Those favoring unconditional engagement with Iran have argued that the current strategy was creating a stalemate that the Iranians are exploiting, allowing them to make technological leaps while the Security Council steps up sanctions.

The Bush administration, in contrast, has argued that it will never negotiate while the Iranians speed ever closer to nuclear-weapons capacity, saying there has to be a standstill as long as talks proceed. In a telephone interview, R. Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary of state for policy, who is carrying out the Iran strategy, said that while he had not heard about the I.A.E.A.'s newest findings they would not affect American policy.

"We're proceeding under the assumption that there is still time for diplomacy to work," he said, though he added that if the Iranians did not agree to suspend production by the time the leaders of the largest industrial nations meet next month, "we will move ahead toward a third set of sanctions."

Dr. ElBaradei has always been skeptical of that strategy, telling European foreign ministers that he doubted the Iranians would fully suspend their nuclear activities, and that a face-saving way must be found to resolve the impasse.

"Quite clearly suspension is a requirement by the Security Council, and I would hope the Iranians would listen to the world community," he said. "But from a proliferation perspective, the fact of the matter is that one of the purposes of suspension — keeping them from getting the knowledge — has been overtaken by events. The focus now should be to stop them from going to industrial scale production, to allow us to do a full-court-press inspection and to be sure they remain inside the treaty."

The report to the Security Council next week is expected to say that since February 2006, when the Iranians stopped complying with an agreement on broad inspections around the country by the agency, the I.A.E.A.'s understanding of "the scope and content" of Iran's nuclear activities has deteriorated.

Inspectors are concerned that Iran has declined to answer a series of questions, posed more than a year ago, about information Iran probably received from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear engineer. Of particular interest is a document that shows how to make uranium into spheres, a shape suitable for use in a weapon.

The inspection conducted on Sunday took place on two hours' notice, a period so short that it appears unlikely that the Iranians could have turned on their centrifuges to impress the inspectors. According to diplomats familiar with the inspectors' report, in addition to 1,300 working centrifuges, 300 more were being tested and appeared ready to

be fed raw nuclear fuel as soon as late this week, the diplomats said. Another 300 were reported to be under construction.

The I.A.E.A. reported more than a week ago that approximately 1,300 centrifuges were in place, but nuclear experts here said that what struck them now was that all the centrifuges appeared to be enriching uranium and running smoothly.

"They are at the stage where they are doing one cascade a week," said one diplomat familiar with the analysis of Iran's activities, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the delicacy of the information. A cascade has 164 centrifuges, and experts say that at this pace, Iran could have 3,000 centrifuges operating by June — enough, if the uranium were enriched further, to make one bomb's worth of nuclear material every year. Tehran may, the diplomat said, be able to build an additional 5,000 centrifuges by the end of the year, for a total of 8,000.

The inspectors have tested the output and concluded that Iran is producing reactor-grade uranium, enriched to a little less than 5 percent purity. But that still worries American officials and I.A.E.A. experts. If Iran stores the uranium and later runs it through centrifuges for four or five more months, it can raise the enrichment to 90 percent, the level needed for a nuclear weapon.

Some Bush administration officials and some nuclear experts here at the I.A.E.A. and elsewhere suspect that the Iranians may not be driving for a weapon but the ability to have sufficient stockpiles of low-enriched uranium that they could produce a bomb within months of evicting inspectors, as North Korea did in 2003. That capacity alone could serve as a nuclear deterrent.

One senior European diplomat, who declined to speak for attribution, said that Washington would now have to confront the question of whether it wants to keep Iran from producing any nuclear material, or whether it wants to keep it from gaining the ability to build a weapon on short notice.

Continued stalemate, the diplomat said, allows Iran to move toward that ability.

But hawks in the administration say that the only position President Bush can take now, without appearing to back down, is to stick to the administration's past argument that "not one centrifuge spins" in Iran. They argue for escalating sanctions and the threat that, if diplomacy fails, the United States could destroy the nuclear facilities.

But even inside the administration, many officials, particularly in the State Department and the Pentagon, argue that military action would create greater chaos in the Middle East and Iranian retribution against American forces in Iraq, and possibly elsewhere.

Moreover, they have argued that Iran's enrichment facilities are still at an early enough stage that a military strike would not set the country's program back very far. Such a strike, they argue, would make sense only once large facilities had been built.

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/15/world/middleeast/15iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Washington Post

May 15, 2007

Pg. 11

Tehran Both Warns And Reassures U.S.

Iran Cautions on Strike, Embraces Talks

By Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writer

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad warned yesterday that Iran would retaliate against any U.S. strike on his country and urged U.S. troops to "pack their bags" and leave the Persian Gulf region. But during a visit yesterday to the United Arab Emirates, he also acknowledged that Tehran is "ready and prepared" to hold talks with the United States.

The first U.S.-Iran bilateral talks are tentatively set for May 28 or earlier in Baghdad, say U.S. and Iranian officials. Ahmadinejad's comments reflect a tempered tone from the hard-line leader, who said the decision was made in order to "support the Iraqi people."

Both Tehran and Washington are attempting to show they have not flip-flopped on their policies. The Bush administration disputed the perception yesterday that it has a contradictory approach that promotes U.N. sanctions on Iran and lashes out over Tehran's nuclear program and its involvement in Iraq -- yet is ready for talks with Iran. En route to Moscow yesterday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Washington agreed to engage with Iran after being urged by Iraq and key allies to discuss ways to stabilize Iraq. "We've had that channel [for talks] for some time, and it seemed like a good time to activate it," Rice told reporters.

But the White House said yesterday that the administration has no intention of restoring diplomatic relations. "This not only is not schizophrenic, it's perfectly consistent with American policy over recent months," spokesman Tony Snow said. "We continue to look for ways appropriately for diplomacy to succeed."

Ahmadinejad was speaking in Abu Dhabi after a visit by Vice President Cheney, who warned Iran against seeking to dominate the Middle East. In exchange, the Iranian leader told Washington to stop trying to dominate the Middle East and to withdraw its 147,000 troops from Iraq and end its military presence in Gulf countries. "What are these outsiders doing in our region?" he asked at a news conference.

Tehran's nuclear program has been a major concern of the administration. Iran has perfected its ability to enrich uranium and has "overtaken" efforts by the United States and others to make it suspend enrichment activity, according to Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the International Atomic Energy Agency. "The focus now should be to stop them from going to industrial scale production," ElBaradei told the New York Times.

The IAEA is due to update Iran's nuclear progress next week in a report to the U.N. Security Council. A council resolution in March gave Tehran 60 days to suspend its enrichment program or risk more sanctions. An IAEA assessment last month said that Iran had more than 1,300 centrifuges operating and that "some" nuclear material was being fed into them for enrichment.

U.S. officials acknowledge that the impending talks are complicated by the plight of Americans detained in Iran.

Radio Farda correspondent Parnaz Azima, who has been prevented from leaving Iran since January, has been summoned to appear today with her lawyer before a revolutionary court. Although Azima has faced repeated interrogations by the intelligence ministry, the dual U.S.-Iran citizen had not been charged with any offense.

The husband of U.S. scholar Haleh Esfandiari denied allegations yesterday in Iran's Kayhan newspaper, which is linked to Ahmadinejad, that the 67-year-old Potomac resident is fomenting revolution inside Iran and spying for the United States and Israel. The unofficial charges against Esfandiari, a Shiite Muslim who is director of Middle East programs at the Woodrow Wilson International Center, offer the first indication of the case Iran may be bringing against her.

Kayhan said Esfandiari had been "one of the main elements of Mossad in driving a velvet revolution strategy in Iran." It also said she ran "obvious intelligence missions" under her cover as a Wilson Center director and used her seminars to "evaluate the capacity of reformists to change the Islamic order."

Her husband, Shaul Bakhash, said she has never been to Israel, or worked with the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or worked with the Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency. Bakhash, a George Mason University professor, said the charges "are sinister and also absurd and fantastical."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/14/AR2007051400189.html>

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Los Angeles Times

May 16, 2007

U.S. Cautious About Iran Nuclear Report

The White House says it believes diplomacy will be sufficient to persuade Tehran to halt its program.

By Bob Drogin, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Bush administration officials reacted cautiously Tuesday to indications that Iran has improved its ability to enrich uranium as fuel for nuclear reactors, a crucial step toward nuclear weapons.

White House and State Department officials say they still believe diplomacy can persuade Iran to freeze its program before it has mastered the complex technology involved.

The International Atomic Energy Agency will report to the United Nations Security Council next week on Iran's apparent progress. The Tehran regime has defied U.N. resolutions demanding an immediate suspension of its nuclear enrichment program, and another negative report by the nuclear watchdog agency is almost certain to spur a new round of U.N. sanctions.

Top IAEA officials suggested that Iran's engineers had achieved significant progress since early this year. The officials indicated that Tehran had overcome several technical challenges that hampered operation of centrifuges in the fuel enrichment plant at Natanz, Iran's main nuclear facility.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director of the IAEA, said that the goal of a suspension — preventing Tehran from gaining knowledge about enrichment — had been overtaken by events.

"We believe they pretty much have the knowledge about how to enrich," ElBaradei told the New York Times on Tuesday. "From now on, it is simply a question of perfecting that knowledge. People will not like to hear it, but that's a fact."

Another IAEA official said Tuesday that ElBaradei was trying to signal that the standoff between Iran and the Security Council "is letting time slip away and that Iran will achieve industrial capabilities in a matter of months" unless a deal is struck.

"He's saying you've got to find a way to get both sides to the bargaining table."

IAEA inspectors who visited Natanz last weekend found about 1,300 centrifuges in operation, although not all were loaded with the uranium gas necessary for enrichment. Iran insists its nuclear effort is designed to generate electricity, and the IAEA now keeps inspectors in Iran full time to monitor the program.

Experts have said Iran will need about 3,000 centrifuges operating for at least a year to produce enough highly enriched uranium for a nuclear bomb. U.S. intelligence analysts fear that if unchecked, Iran conceivably could reach that point by 2009.

Attempts to persuade Iran to halt its nuclear program have foundered, in part, over demands that Tehran suspend enrichment as a precondition to negotiations. Iranian officials have refused to do so.

Tony Snow, the White House press secretary, said Tuesday that Iran "continues to isolate itself with rhetoric" that raises "the fear that they're trying to develop nuclear weapons. That is unacceptable."

The Bush administration has sought to negotiate with Iran on several key disputes over the last year, and the long-frozen relations appear to be thawing slightly. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice talked briefly with Iran's foreign minister this month, and senior U.S. and Iranian diplomats have agreed to meet in Baghdad in coming weeks to discuss the insurgency in Iraq.

On the other hand, Vice President Dick Cheney flew to an American aircraft carrier steaming 150 miles off the Iranian coast last week to warn that the United States was prepared to use military force to keep Tehran from disrupting oil routes or "gaining nuclear weapons and dominating this region."

Tom Casey, a State Department spokesman, emphasized Tuesday that a diplomatic solution would be the best way to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"We do believe that we are on the right course, that there is still time to resolve this diplomatically" and persuade Iran to "ultimately change their behavior and ... reverse this program," Casey said.

He added that the installation of several hundred centrifuges at Natanz in recent months did not prove Tehran had achieved "complete mastery of the fuel cycle."

Several U.S. nuclear experts also expressed skepticism.

"There's been an incremental amount of progress by Iran," said David Albright of the nonpartisan Institute for Science and International Security. "It's been obvious for several months that Iran knows how to run a centrifuge. They don't know how to run 3,000, but they're going to learn."

The Iranians "are learning more day by day," said Matthew Bunn, assistant director of Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. "Whether they're six months or a year away, one can debate. But it's not 10 years."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-irannuke16may16,1,3632406.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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