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Washington Times
September 28, 2006
Pg. 1

U.S. To Wait 'A Few Weeks' On Iran Move

By Nicholas Kravev, The Washington Times

The Bush administration yesterday postponed its pursuit of U.N. sanctions against Iran for "a few weeks" to allow its European allies time to try to negotiate a suspension of Iran's nuclear fuel production.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, told Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in a telephone conversation before meeting with Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani in Berlin that Mr. Larijani "seems to be sincere" in trying to find a compromise, U.S. officials said.

The five-hour talks between the EU representative and the Iranian negotiator were described as intensive. The two men planned to meet again today, Solana spokeswoman Cristina Gallach said.

The United States has said it would join the Europeans in direct negotiations with Iran on incentives only if it stopped enriching uranium. Uranium can be used to produce atomic bombs or to fuel nuclear power plants. Officials said that Mr. Solana suggested a little more time to negotiate a suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities might pay off, and that Miss Rice agreed.

"Our response was, 'Absolutely, if it's a matter of a few days, a few weeks here to see if there is a possibility of keeping open a negotiated diplomatic solution,' " State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. "We want to give that every opportunity to succeed."

The administration had given Tehran an Aug. 31 deadline and threatened to push for sanctions. China and Russia have been firm in refusing to join in any punitive move.

On Tuesday, The Washington Times reported that Iran was close to reaching a compromise with the Europeans but was seeking a way to keep any enrichment suspension secret. Tehran denied it was considering such a deal.

Mr. McCormack said yesterday that the Iranians' "disposition to this point has not been to give clear answers," but he expressed hope that their behavior might be changing.

"There may be an opportunity here, there may be a little opening if we just give the Iranians a little time and space," he said. "Perhaps they will come through with a positive answer."

He declined to answer directly the question about a secret deal, saying that, if the United States showed up for negotiations with Iran, everyone would know that enrichment suspension -- Washington's only condition for participation -- had taken place.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad suggested during a seminar in Tehran that the West has proposed a quiet understanding that would help both sides save face.

"In negotiations, they tell us to suspend uranium enrichment for one day on the pretext of some technical problem and let us continue negotiations with you," Mr. Ahmadinejad was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency. "The Iranian nation will not give up its right."

The Iranian Students News Agency reported the president as saying: "They say, 'You should suspend uranium enrichment on the surface, helping us to say that Iran accepted suspension,' but I have to say we are men of negotiation but we do not demand negotiation."

Miss Rice warned that, despite her willingness to wait a few more weeks, "clearly this won't go on very much longer."

"Obviously, if we can come out of this with an Iranian decision to suspend its enrichment and reprocessing activity completely and verifiably, then we would be on a course of negotiations -- that's the course we would all like to pursue," she said.

One of the issues that Mr. Solana and Mr. Larijani discussed was how long any suspension would last, diplomats said.

The Iranian official, they added, is constrained by conflicting views in his government between those who do not want confrontation with the West and those for whom uranium enrichment is a source of pride.

"I have the expectation that the talks today will be successful," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier told reporters in Berlin. "I think that today we will not get any final news, but hopefully in the course of tomorrow." <http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060928-125459-2732r.htm>

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The Plain Dealer

Cleveland

Help wanted for Iraq jihad: nuclear scientists, flacks

Friday, September 29, 2006

David Rising

Associated Press

Baghdad, Iraq- Chemists. Physicists. Nuclear scientists. Explosives experts. Al-Qaida in Iraq says it needs them all. "We are in dire need of you," the terror group's leader said in a chilling audio message released Thursday. "The field of jihad can satisfy your scientific ambitions, and the large American bases [in Iraq] are good places to test your unconventional weapons, whether biological or dirty, as they call them."

The fugitive terror chief said experts in the fields of "chemistry, physics, electronics, media and all other sciences - especially nuclear scientists and explosives experts" should join his group's jihad, or holy war, against the West.

The speaker on the tape identified himself as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, also known as Abu Ayyub al-Masri. The voice could not be independently identified, but it was thought to be al-Masri's. He is believed to have succeeded Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who died in a U.S. airstrike north of Baghdad in June, as head of the al-Qaida-linked organization.

Al-Masri also said more than 4,000 foreign militants have been killed in Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 - the first known statement from the insurgents about their death toll.

It was unclear why al-Masri would advertise the loss of the group's foreign fighters, but martyrdom is revered among Islamic fundamentalists and could be used as a recruiting tool. Analysts said the announcement was likely a boast aimed at drumming up support.

"It's showing the level of dedication to their cause, the level of sacrifice jihadists are making," said Ben N. Venzke, director of the Washington-based IntelCenter, which monitors terrorism communications.

"In a strange kind of way, it's almost showing a sense of strength and purpose in their cause to other people around the world who might be thinking about joining the fight," Venzke.

The statement followed the release of a U.N. report Wednesday that said fewer foreign fighters have been killed or captured in Iraq in the last few months, "suggesting that the flow has slackened." The report also said some fighters had expressed dissatisfaction that they were asked to kill fellow Muslims rather than Western soldiers and that the only role for them was to be suicide bombers.

Still, the report said al-Qaida "has gained by continuing to play a central role in the fighting and in encouraging the growth of sectarian violence; and Iraq has provided many recruits and an excellent training ground."

On the tape, al-Masri offered amnesty to Iraqis who cooperated with their country's "occupiers," calling on them to "return to your religion and nation" during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which Sunnis began observing in Iraq on Saturday and Shiites on Monday.

"We will not attack you as long as you declare your true repentance in front of your tribe and relatives," al-Masri said. "The amnesty ends by the end of this holy month."

Meanwhile, as part of the Baghdad security plan crackdown on sectarian militias, known as Operation Together Forward, U.S. and Iraqi troops have been going neighborhood-by-neighborhood clearing buildings. Government spokesman Ali al-Dabagh indicated that another part of the plan would begin soon: funneling all vehicular traffic into Baghdad through 28 checkpoints.

<http://www.cleveland.com/news/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/news/1159525900113480.xml&coll=2>

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Washington Post
September 29, 2006
Pg. 21

Iran's Uranium Glitch

Technical Troubles Offer Time for Diplomacy

By David Ignatius

Intelligence analysts believe that Iran is encountering technical difficulties in mastering the complex process of uranium enrichment. That means the West may have a bit more time than previously expected to pursue a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear standoff.

The problem, according to intelligence officials, is that the centrifuges that are supposed to enrich uranium are overheating. Some are breaking down and must be replaced. As a result, Iran has not ramped up its enrichment effort as quickly as analysts had expected.

This assessment is based on recent conversations with analysts from several Western nations that are watching the Iranian program closely and on an unpublished report by the International Atomic Energy Agency that was completed Aug. 31. To me, it's the equivalent of adding some extra time to the clock in a tense football game. The urgency remains, but there is an opportunity for a few additional plays before the game is over.

"There's time, purely from the point of view of the technical development of the threat, to let diplomacy play out in the case of Iran," says Harvard professor Ashton B. Carter, who closely follows the issue.

The technical difficulties involve the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz, north of Isfahan in central Iran. The Iranians broke IAEA seals at Natanz in January and began enriching uranium. It's a highly complex process, in which uranium gas is injected into the linked array of centrifuges that spin at roughly the speed of sound. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced April 11 that the Iranians had succeeded in enriching uranium to an initial level of 3.5 percent, and in June Iran told the IAEA it had achieved 5 percent enrichment. That's far below the 90 percent level needed for a nuclear weapon, but it suggested the Iranians were on their way to mastering the technology.

Western analysts had expected that the Iranians would move quickly to expand the enrichment effort to meet their near-term goal of having six cascades of 164 centrifuges each, or a total of nearly 1,000 centrifuges. The danger here was technological mastery rather than raw output of uranium. Even with 3,000 centrifuges operating, intelligence analysts estimate that it would take two to three years to produce enough highly enriched uranium for one bomb.

Iran's eventual goal is a massive array of more than 50,000 centrifuges at Natanz.

But problems surfaced this summer. The Aug. 31 IAEA report, marked "Restricted Distribution," noted that since June, Iran had been feeding uranium into a small 20-centrifuge test cascade "for short periods of time," and that it had conducted various tests in June, July and August of the initial 164-centrifuge cascade. "The installation of a second 164-machine cascade is proceeding," the report noted, but it added that Iran planned to test the second cascade in September without injecting uranium.

What happened to slow the expected pace? IAEA analysts have told U.S. and European officials that it appears the centrifuges are overheating when uranium gas is injected. "The Iranians are unable to control higher temperatures, and after a short period they must stop because of higher temperatures. So far they haven't been able to solve this," says one Western intelligence official who has been briefed on the IAEA findings. In addition, this official said, some centrifuges "are simply crashing -- 10 or so have broken down and must be replaced."

There's a lively debate among intelligence analysts about what may be causing these problems. One theory holds that Iran's home-produced uranium, mixed with foreign ore, isn't sufficiently pure for the delicate centrifuges, but other analysts reject that argument. Several analysts I talked to agreed, however, that if Iranian scientists continue with enrichment, they are likely to solve the technical problems eventually through trial and error. That's why U.S. and European officials are still calling for Iran to suspend enrichment, before they have cracked the puzzles they are encountering.

Iran continues to insist that its nuclear program is peaceful. And although it's taken for granted in many Western countries that these statements mask a secret plan to build nuclear weapons, intelligence analysts from several nations told me they lack decisive evidence of an Iranian bomb effort. So far, there is no "smoking gun," said an intelligence analyst from one Western nation. Nevertheless, the United States, Israel and some European countries remain convinced that a covert weapons program exists.

The clock is still ticking. That's the real import of these new intelligence findings. Iran and the West still have time to find a diplomatic solution to the nuclear showdown. This genie isn't quite out of the bottle.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/09/28/AR2006092801453.html>

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Kansas City Star

Friday, September 29, 2006

Hoof-and-mouth peril seen

More planning is needed to make the vast agricultural industry safer, agroterrorism conference is told.

By ADJOA ADOFO

The Kansas City Star

When he visited a Nebraska feedlot of 10,000 cattle last week, David Franz saw it as a perfect bull's-eye for a potential terrorist attack.

"There were people driving in and out," said Franz, director of the National Agriculture Biosecurity Center at Kansas State University. "Nobody was checking. There was really no control."

With thousands of farms in Kansas and Missouri alone, experts say the vulnerabilities are endless. One goal of the second annual International Symposium on Agroterrorism this week at Westin Crown Center has been to discuss those threats and share notes.

One potential threat many are focusing on now is hoof-and-mouth disease in cattle, for example, and some possible defenses include an animal identification system to track an outbreak.

But one major need is emerging: To bring together planning that includes all the different strands of the vast agricultural industry.

"The problem is we need some leadership to pull this thing together," said Dave Baker, assistant dean of University of Missouri extension and one of the speakers at the conference, which ends today.

And that's what a joint task force is beginning to address.

So far, the Strategic Partnership Program on Agroterrorism has begun assessing the vulnerabilities of various facilities ranging from production of poultry to baby food. While it has distributed recommendations, it is keeping the threats themselves secret.

"Guidance documents are the first attempt to harden the food sector from terrorist attacks," said Donald Kautter, a Food and Drug Administration scientist who spoke on opening day of the conference.

The partnership was created last November by the FDA, FBI, Department of Homeland Security and U.S.

Department of Agriculture. It was an outgrowth of a presidential directive to Homeland Security in 2004 to address agroterrorism.

On Thursday, representatives of the program held a seminar to report on its first year and to ask private industry to invite it to conduct an assessment of operations.

But several attendees at the conference raised concerns that the assessments might violate their privacy and perhaps give away trade secrets.

The effort faces other obstacles, including the size and diversity of the industry, including everyone from small farmers to national food conglomerates. That makes it difficult to come up with a cohesive plan.

"Depending on who is doing the assessment, they may have different perspectives that they're looking at and yes, that's an issue," said Marty Vanier, associate director of National Agriculture Biosecurity Center.

It's also difficult to inform farmers about bioterrorism, Kautter said. The program conducts nationwide information sessions, but many farmers don't have the ability to leave their farms, especially at harvest times.

"These are very high-level plans," Franz said. "I'm not sure how well they're implemented all the way down."

So far, the recommendations are voluntary.

Lyle Jackson of Homeland Security said the task force has considered regulating biosecurity in private industry and determined there was no need because those firms are already concerned.

But an immediate threat could change government's approach.

"Right now we don't have any intel that says there is going to be an attack in the immediate future," Kautter said. "I believe the approach would be different if there was an immediate threat."

The biggest threat discussed at the conference this week has been hoof-and-mouth disease, which could devastate the cattle industry.

Kansas City FBI agent David Cudmore said that the Sept. 11, 2001, attack was not necessarily designed by terrorists to kill a lot of people.

"That was a bonus for them; they wanted to attack our financial structure," Cudmore said. "They're not going to kill people with foot-and-mouth disease, but boy will they hit our pockets. We'd lose billions; it will almost cripple us economically."

If a hoof-and-mouth attack occurred, Cudmore said, the United States does not have an effective animal identification system to track it. Such identification now is voluntary.

"You have 110,000 farms in the state of Missouri and mass hysteria is one of the results terrorists are looking for," Baker said.

Other threats, such as soybean rust, are more easily traced. Scientists tracked a recent outbreak to an infection that arrived with a hurricane.

Also, farms are wide-open spaces that are difficult to monitor. That means workers and visitors need to be monitored, which can be expensive.

"We need to begin at the local level and assist our farms and producers to put in their own biosecurity programs," Baker said.

<http://www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/news/local/15634323.htm>

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Trafficking in Nuclear and Radioactive Material in 2005

IAEA Releases Latest Illicit Trafficking Database Statistics

Staff Report

21 August 2006

There were 103 confirmed incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and radioactive materials in 2005, newly released statistics from the Agency's Illicit Trafficking Database (ITDB) show. The ITDB covers a broad range of cases from illegal possession, attempted sale and smuggling, to unauthorized disposal of materials and discoveries of lost radiological sources.

Eighteen of the confirmed incidents in 2005 involved nuclear materials; 76 involved radioactive material, mainly radioactive sources; two involved both nuclear and other radioactive materials, and seven involved radioactively contaminated materials.

Another 57 incidents from previous years were reported. They involved illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities and had occurred earlier, mainly in 2004.

Two reported cases in 2005 involved small quantities of high-enriched uranium (HEU) which is a fissile material. In New Jersey, USA, a package containing 3.3 grams of HEU was reported inadvertently disposed of. The second incident occurred in Fukui, Japan, when a neutron flux detector containing 0.0017 grams was lost at a nuclear power plant.

"From the terrorism threat standpoint, these cases are of little concern but they show security vulnerabilities at facilities handling HEU," the latest report from the ITDB said. Indeed the majority of cases reported in 2005 showed no evidence of criminal activity.

The ITDB facilitates the exchange of authoritative information on incidents of trafficking in nuclear and radioactive materials. There are 91 countries that report to the IAEA's database. See Story Resources for the full report, which covers the past 13 years.

The Past 13 Years: 1993 - 2005

Nuclear Materials

During the thirteen year period, there were 16 confirmed incidents that involved trafficking in HEU and plutonium - which are fissile materials needed to make a nuclear weapon. A few of these incidents involved seizures of kilogram quantities of weapons-usable nuclear material, but most involved very small quantities.

View Chart: Incidents Involving HEU and Pu (1993-2005) » [pdf] (Link Below)

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Features/RadSources/PDF/table1-2005.pdf>

The majority of confirmed cases with nuclear materials involved low-grade nuclear materials, i.e. low enriched uranium (LEU) mostly in the form of reactor fuel pellets, and natural uranium, depleted uranium, and thorium.

"Where information on motives is available, it indicates that profit seeking is the principal motive behind such events," the ITDB report said.

View Chart: Incidents Involving Nuclear Materials (1993-2005) » [pdf] (Link Below)

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Features/RadSources/PDF/chart2-2005.pdf>

Other Radioactive Materials

During 1993-2005, just over 60 incidents involved high-risk "dangerous" radioactive sources, which present considerable radiological danger if used in a malicious act. "In the hands of terrorists or other criminals, some radioactive sources could be used for malicious purposes, e.g. in a radiological dispersal device (RDD) or 'dirty bomb'," the ITDB said. The overwhelming majority of incidents concerning "dangerous" sources were reported over the last six years. The majority of all incidents involved the radioisotope Caesium 137.

View Chart: Incidents Involving Radioactive Sources, by Type of Radioisotope (1993-2005) » [pdf] (Link Below)

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Features/RadSources/PDF/chart3-2005.pdf>

View Chart: Incidents Involving Radioactive Sources, by Type of Application (1993-2005) » [pdf] (Link Below)

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Features/RadSources/PDF/chart4-2005.pdf>

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/News/2006/traffickingstats2005.html>

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Illicit Trafficking and Other Unauthorized Activities involving Nuclear and Radioactive Materials

Fact Sheet

About IAEA Illicit Trafficking Database (ITDB)

Since 1995, the Agency has been maintaining the Illicit Trafficking Database (ITDB). The ITDB is the Agency's information system on incidents of illicit trafficking and other unauthorized activities involving nuclear and other radioactive materials. It provides essential information support to the IAEA's nuclear security programme. The ITDB's principle objective is to facilitate the exchange of authoritative information on reported incidents among States. In addition, the collected information is analysed to identify common trends and patterns, assess threats, and evaluate weaknesses in material security and detection capabilities and practices.

Communication with participating Member States is maintained through the network of national Points of Contact (POC). Meetings of the POCs are organized to review the Database operations. . . (To view complete report, click on link below.)

http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Features/RadSources/PDF/fact_figures2005.pdf

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Washington Times
September 30, 2006
Pg. 1

Kazakhstan Touts Itself As Nuke-Free Model

By David R. Sands, The Washington Times

Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev said yesterday that his country's plan to dismantle its vast Soviet-era nuclear weapons programs could serve as a model for solving the confrontation over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Mr. Nazarbayev spoke with a small group of reporters at Blair House after an Oval Office meeting and working lunch with President Bush. It was the Central Asian leader's first official visit to Washington in five years.

The Kazakh leader, whose human rights record has been sharply criticized by some U.S. groups during his visit, also said Mr. Bush had offered his support for Kazakhstan's bid to chair the 55-nation Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2009, which would be a diplomatic first for a former Soviet republic.

"Of course, in order to meet that objective, we have to accomplish a lot by 2009 and we are eager to do so," Mr. Nazarbayev said, speaking through a translator.

American and Kazakh energy officials announced yesterday an agreement to "down-blend" Kazakhstan's remaining stocks of highly enriched uranium, which can be used for nuclear weapons, and to convert a Kazakh research reactor so it can operate on the safer, low-enriched uranium for civilian power needs.

Mr. Nazarbayev, who has led his country since it gained independence in 1991, called Iran a "very close neighbor," and said he explained to hard-line Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in a recent talk the benefits Kazakhstan had won by voluntarily giving up its weapons, test sites and other nuclear assets inherited after the Soviet collapse. He said his country in return had received security and territorial guarantees from the United States and other major powers, as well as major American financial aid to eliminate existing weapons stocks and transform its facilities to peaceful uses.

"I told the president of Iran, 'Isn't that a shining example for Iran to follow?'" Mr. Nazarbayev said.

Mr. Ahmadinejad continues to defy U.N. demands that he halt Iran's efforts to enrich uranium.

The 66-year-old Mr. Nazarbayev displayed the balancing skills that have helped keep his large, resource-rich and lightly populated country an island of relative stability and prosperity in the troubled Central Asian region.

He noted that Kazakhstan also has extensive political and economic ties with Russia and China, even as it rates as a "strategic partner" of the United States.

The country's vast oil and gas reserves and its image as a model Muslim ally in the U.S.-led war on terror have boosted Kazakhstan's standing with the Bush administration, which has generally softened its public criticisms of the country's democratic shortcomings.

"I have watched very carefully the development of this important country from one that was in the Soviet space to one that is now a free nation," Mr. Bush told the Kazakh leader yesterday in the Oval Office, "and I appreciate your leadership."

A joint statement by the two leaders did not mention the U.S. stand on the OSCE chairmanship.

In an apparent reference to the government's closing last spring of two U.S. advocacy groups promoting democratic parties and institutions in Kazakhstan, the statement said Kazakh officials supported such groups and "will take the necessary steps to facilitate their legal functioning."³

Mr. Nazarbayev received a relatively warm welcome in Washington, a reflection of his country's political progress and an economy producing strong growth and expanding opportunities for foreign investors.

Just before the visit, Mr. Nazarbayev's government signed an accord to transport Kazakh oil through the new pipeline across Armenia, Georgia and Turkey, a route that bypasses Russia and has been strongly supported by the U.S. government.

During his visit, Mr. Nazarbayev also met with the heads of major U.S. corporations considering new investment in the country, including ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and Halliburton.

Mr. Nazarbayev said General Electric had just signed a major deal to locate a factory in Kazakhstan.

The OSCE and Western civil rights groups have criticized restrictions on last year's presidential campaign, which gave the president a new seven-year term with 91 percent of the vote.

The country also has been shaken by the violent deaths of two opposition leaders in late 2005 and early 2006.

Analysts said Mr. Nazarbayev is genuinely popular despite the government's tight oversight of the press and political dissent, in large part because of rising prosperity.

But the recent violence suggests that the delicate balance of competing factions within the country's ruling elite, with Mr. Nazarbayev as the ultimate arbiter, is under growing stress, according to Daniel Kimmage, Central Asia analyst for Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty.

Mr. Nazarbayev in the interview acknowledged his country's democracy is "not perfect," but said his government has made a conscious decision to make economic development the first priority after independence.

As for getting 90 percent of the vote, he switched briefly to English to joke, "I am sorry."

"I wish it could have been less so you all would believe in it," he said, "but do you expect me to go to people and say, 'Don't vote for me. Vote for that guy.'?"

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060930-010820-2756r.htm>

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New York Times
October 1, 2006

Iran Leader Rejects Even Brief Halt In Its Uranium Enrichment Efforts

TEHRAN, Sept. 30 (Agence France-Presse) — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Saturday that Iran would not halt uranium enrichment even for a short period.

"They want us to suspend for a short period, and then they will use this for propaganda and say Iran has suspended and it has caved in," Mr. Ahmadinejad said in a speech to students on the first day of the new university term, according to the student news agency ISNA.

"Nobody has the right to make Iran back down over its rights," he said. "With rationality and with logic, we will defend the rights of Iran."

The comments come just two days after talks between Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, and the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, ended in Berlin without agreement. European diplomats have said that Mr. Larijani offered a two-month suspension in talks recently. Some diplomats say there may be division within Iran's leadership over whether to allow a suspension.

European diplomats still hope Iran will agree to some kind of suspension under a deal offered by the five permanent United Nations Security Council members plus Germany that offers Tehran a package of diplomatic and economic incentives.

The United States, which has refused to hold direct talks with Iran unless it suspends uranium enrichment, has been pushing for more international pressure to halt Tehran's nuclear program over concerns that it is meant not to produce electricity, as Iran contends, but nuclear arms.

"They have been putting pressure on us to suspend enrichment," Mr. Ahmadinejad said Saturday. "At first they asked us to suspend for six months, then they asked us to suspend for three months, then for one month. We said no. 'Now they have proposed that we suspend for a short period, for one day, but we asked them, 'Why do you want us to suspend?'"

"They said suspend for a few days and explain that you have technical problems. But we have no technical problems! Why should we lie to the people?"

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/01/world/middleeast/01iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Los Angeles Times
October 2, 2006

Iran Escalates Its Nuclear Rhetoric

Ahmadinejad says his country will install up to 100,000 centrifuges to produce more fuel.

By Associated Press

TEHRAN — Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday said his country was determined to expand its uranium enrichment program, announcing a plan to produce more fuel and calling allegations that Tehran was seeking nuclear weapons a "big lie."

Speaking to professors at Tehran University, Ahmadinejad reinforced his rejection of demands by the U.S. and others to stop enrichment, saying his country was committed to generating nuclear fuel for electricity.

"Allegations or charges by the United States that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons" are a big lie, Ahmadinejad said during his speech, which was broadcast on state-run television.

The process of uranium enrichment can be used to produce fuel for a nuclear reactor or material for a warhead, depending on the level of enrichment.

The U.S. alleges that Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons, but Iran contends that its program is for peaceful purposes.

Ahmadinejad said in his speech that Iran hoped to install as many as 100,000 centrifuges, which spin uranium gas into enriched material. He did not provide any more details or set a timeline, but installing so many centrifuges could take years.

In April, Iran announced for the first time that it had produced a batch of low-enriched uranium, using 164 centrifuges.

It also has said it plans to install 3,000 centrifuges by the end of the year at its plant in Natanz. Large-scale production would require 54,000 centrifuges.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran2oct02,1,7955488.story>

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Business

Oct 2, 2006

Shipping

U.S. security bill targets ports, avoids rail

Legislation aims to stop nuclear, chemical or biological devices in cargo containers

JIM ABRAMS

Associated Press

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Congress approved a major ports security bill early Saturday, providing new steps to prevent terrorists from slipping a nuclear, chemical or biological device into one of the 11 million shipping containers entering the United States every year.

Passage of the bill was the last act of the House as lawmakers left for a five-week election campaign during which candidates will be trying to prove to voters their commitment to keeping America safe in the war on terrorism. The Senate passed it by a voice vote, sending it to U.S. President George W. Bush for his signature.

Containers, now largely uninspected, "have the potential to be the Trojan Horse of the 21st century," said Senator Susan Collins, a Republican from Maine and chairwoman of the U.S. Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. She said the legislation would be a "major leap ahead" in strengthening national security.

Democrats favoured the bill, but said it failed to address rail and mass transit, other areas considered highly vulnerable to terrorist attacks.

"The terrorist attacks on rail and transit systems in Spain, London and Mumbai should be enough evidence to convince the Republican-led Congress that U.S. rails are dangerously vulnerable," said Senator Joe Lieberman, a Democrat from Connecticut.

The bill approves \$400-million (U.S.) a year over five years for risk-based grants for training and exercises at ports. It requires the nation's 22 largest ports, which handle 98 per cent of all cargo entering the country, to install radiation detectors by the end of next year.

Pilot programs would be established at three foreign ports to test technology for non-intrusive cargo inspections.

Currently only one foreign port, Hong Kong, scans all U.S.-bound cargo for nuclear materials.

Background checks and credentials will be required for workers at the nation's 361 ports, and the Homeland Security Department would set up protocols for resuming operations after an attack or incident.

It is feared that a terrorist attack, such as a nuclear device set off by remote control, could cripple the entire economy as well as cause massive casualties.

Preferential cargo processing is offered to importers who meet certain security requirements.

The bill would authorize \$3.4-billion over five years for ports security. The House vote was 409-2, with only Massachusetts Democrat Edward Markey and Arizona Republican Jeff Flake opposing.

The bill was slow in reaching the House and Senate floors because lawmakers from both sides sought to attach their own favourite pieces of legislation to the ports measure because of the certainty it would reach the president's desk.

In the end, the only major add-on was legislation to restrict Internet gambling. Also attached was a measure, pushed by Senator David Vitter, a Republican from Louisiana, to help communities lacking telecommunications infrastructure install sirens and other emergency alert systems.

With an eye to the election, Congress has concentrated on security-related issues in the past two weeks, considering measures on military tribunals, spending for defence and homeland security and a bill to build a 1,100-kilometre fence along the Mexican border.

Democrats, in a letter to House Homeland Security Committee chairman Peter King, who headed House-Senate negotiations on the bill, complained they were denied the right to offer amendments to restore rail security language contained in the original Senate bill.

Congress made port security a priority after a fight in February over a buyout that put a Dubai company in control of some operations at six American ports. The outcry led the Dubai company, Dubai Ports World, to promise it would sell the U.S. operations to an American company. The sale is pending.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20061002.IBPORTS02/TPStory/Business>

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U.S. Wins A United Front On Iran

China, Russia to join push for sanctions

By Nicholas Kravov, The Washington Times

The United States is confident that Russia and China will join it in pushing for U.N. sanctions against Iran if it does not agree to suspend enriching uranium this week, a senior U.S. official said yesterday.

R. Nicholas Burns, undersecretary of state for political affairs, also said the U.N. Security Council will insist on a clear answer to its demand that Iran suspend its enrichment activity. A "maybe" will be considered a "no," he said. "For four months now, we've been waiting for an answer," Mr. Burns told editors and reporters at a luncheon at The Washington Times. "We've said, if they don't suspend enrichment, we'll take them to the Security Council and sanction them. We do believe we have Russian and Chinese support for that."

The five permanent council members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- along with Germany on June 1 offered Iran a package of economic and political incentives if it suspends enrichment and asked for an answer by the end of July.

When there was no answer, the council passed a resolution threatening sanctions under Article 41 of Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter and gave Tehran another deadline, Aug. 31. But Iran began negotiating "seriously" with the Europeans only in mid-September, Mr. Burns said, and the Bush administration decided to wait a little longer.

At a dinner in New York on Sept. 18, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her five counterparts agreed that the first week of October would be the absolute deadline for Iran "to say yes or no," Mr. Burns said.

"She agreed with the Russians, Chinese and Europeans," he said of Miss Rice, "that, if Iran said no, we would all go to sanctions together at the Security Council."

He said a scheduled meeting this week between Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, and Ali Larijani, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, should bring "clarity."

"If [Iran's answer] is maybe, it's a no," Mr. Burns said. "If it's 'We'd like to negotiate this further,' it has been negotiated for four months. At some point, you have to draw the line. So I think you'll have the answer by the end of the week."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad repeatedly has rejected the calls for suspending enrichment but denies that his country is pursuing a nuclear weapon.

Mr. Burns rejected a suggestion by Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, made in an interview with The Times last week, that Iran be offered a deal similar to the one Kazakhstan made when it gave up its nuclear arsenal in the 1990s. The country received a U.S. promise at that time that it would not be invaded.

But Mr. Burns said the Bush administration has refused to offer security guarantees to Iran because of other concerns, most recently its support for the terrorist group Hezbollah during its war with Israel in southern Lebanon. "We saw the war this summer not to be just a border war," he said. "We saw this as a new element in the Middle East -- the Iranian and Syrian involvement."

"We are also very concerned about this nexus of terrorism -- Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, Hamas, [Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.] We think they are coordinating their actions, and we are trying to push back on that."

Mr. Burns said the Iranian issue would be Miss Rice's primary concern when she meets today in Cairo with the foreign ministers of Egypt, Jordan and the six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

He also said the Bush administration was waiting to see the results of a cease-fire agreement between Pakistan's government and tribal leaders in North and South Waziristan, an area of Pakistan that many intelligence analysts think is being used as a base for Taliban and al Qaeda attacks on Afghanistan.

"We've told the Pakistanis that, while we understand what they are trying to do in dealing with an extraordinarily difficult situation, we have some questions and concerns about it, and we are going to watch and see how it works," Mr. Burns said.

"Our view is -- and it has been amply and clearly expressed to the Pakistani government -- that they have an obligation to go after the foreign terrorist groups that are our enemies and theirs, and a big problem in Afghanistan."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20061002-115823-2257r.htm>

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Iranian nuclear official proposes that France enrich Iran's uranium

PARIS (AP) — A top Iranian nuclear official proposed Tuesday that France create a consortium to enrich uranium in Iran, saying that could satisfy international demands for outside oversight of Tehran's nuclear program.

French officials distanced themselves from the idea, which an analyst called an Iranian attempt to stall or divert attention from mounting tensions over its nuclear activities. But the European Union official leading negotiations with Iran over its atomic program said the proposal was worth a closer look.

"To be able to arrive at a solution, we have just had an idea. We propose that France create a consortium for the production in Iran of enriched uranium," Mohammad Saeedi, deputy chief of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told France-Info radio.

"That way France, through the companies Eurodif and Areva, could control in a tangible way our enrichment activities," he said.

Eurodif is a branch of Areva, a French state-controlled nuclear manufacturer, and was created in part with Iranian backing in the 1970s.

World powers — including France and the United States — are in a standoff with Iran over its nuclear program, which Tehran insists is aimed at producing electricity, but which many nations fear is aimed at making nuclear weapons. Iran ignored a U.N.-imposed Aug. 31 deadline to suspend uranium enrichment or face possible sanctions. A senior British official said preparations were underway for the U.N. Security Council to discuss sanctions.

The official said he believed that any sanctions would start by focusing on preventing the transfer of all goods that could be used for Iran's enrichment and ballistic missile programs, not on the country's economy or oil exports.

"Unless there is a sudden, unexpected change of heart by the Iranians, we can expect this to move to New York in the coming week or so," the official said on condition of anonymity, in keeping with government rules regarding background briefings.

Saeedi gave no other details of his proposal, which appeared to be an Iranian initiative. An official at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran referred all questions on the subject to the French side.

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Jean-Baptiste Mattei said he was surprised by the idea, which he called "totally new for us."

Mattei said any proposals should wait until after negotiations are underway and emphasized that the current priority was talks between Iranian nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani and European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana. Solana gave a cautious response to the proposal, saying the idea of a consortium had long been discussed in his talks with Larijani.

"It's an interesting thing, but it's difficult to put it in place," Solana said on the sidelines of an EU defense ministers' meeting in Finland.

Iranian state television, in a commentary Tuesday, said the proposal amounted to a "a test ... to assess the extent of the French government's realism and flexibility."

It said timing of the proposal — following talks between Larijani and Solana — "shows Iran's determination in seeking a negotiated settlement" over Tehran's nuclear activities.

Still, the proposal was unlikely to be accepted by the six nations — the five U.N. Security Council members plus Germany — trying to persuade Iran to suspend enrichment because it would leave the program on Iranian soil — something the six nations oppose. Enrichment can create both nuclear fuel or arm nuclear warheads with fissile material.

Moscow has sought to defuse the dispute with Iran by offering to conduct all of Iran's enrichment on Russian soil, but Tehran has refused.

Immediate sanctions, favored by the U.S. and Britain, have been resisted by France, to some extent, and by Russia and China — both major commercial partners of Iran.

Georges Le Guelte, a nuclear expert at France's Institute for International and Strategic Research, called Saeedi's announcement "a diversion tactic."

He said the international community was unlikely to agree to such a deal because the enrichment would still take place on Iranian territory.

"This is something that would be almost as dangerous as leaving the Iranians to do it alone," he said. "The day that (Iran's president) thinks the international situation would permit, he will show Areva and Eurodif the door and say, 'Now I will take care of the plant.'"

Areva spokesman Charles Hufnagel expressed surprise at Saeedi's announcement.

"We are not involved in any negotiations" about a possible consortium for enriching Iranian uranium, he said. He added that any discussions involving nuclear cooperation with Iran would be at the government level because of the sensitivity of the issue.

Iran's participation in Eurodif was reduced after the 1979 revolution, and now Iran has a "purely financial" stake of about 11% through a joint French-Iranian company called Sofidif, Hufnagel said.

Saeedi gave no other details of his proposal, and it was not clear when he made his comments to France-Info. Russia is building the Islamic republic's first nuclear power plant in the southern port of Bushehr under an \$800 million contract. Moscow says it has worked out a deal with Iran for all of Bushehr's spent fuel to be sent to Russia, eliminating the possibility that Iran could reprocess it for weapons.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-10-03-iran-nuke_x.htm

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