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Washington Times

February 16, 2006

Pg. 1

Commercial Photos Show Chinese Nuke Buildup

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

Commercial satellite photos made public recently provide a new look at China's nuclear forces and bases images that include the first view of a secret underwater submarine tunnel.

A Pentagon official said the photograph of the tunnel entrance reveals for the first time a key element of China's hidden military buildup. Similar but more detailed intelligence photos of the entrance are highly classified within the U.S. government, the official said.

"The Chinese have a whole network of secret facilities that the U.S. government understands but cannot make public," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "This is the first public revelation of China's secret buildup."

The photographs, taken from 2000 to 2004, show China's Xia-class ballistic missile submarine docked at the Jianggezhuang base, located on the Yellow Sea in Shandong province.

Nuclear warheads for the submarine's 12 JL-1 missiles are thought to be stored inside an underwater tunnel that was photographed about 450 meters to the northwest of the submarine. The high-resolution satellite photo shows a waterway leading to a ground-covered facility.

Other photographs show additional underground military facilities, including the Feidong air base in Anhui province with a runway built into a nearby hill.

The photographs were obtained by the nonprofit groups Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Federation of American Scientists. The photos first appeared Friday in the winter edition of the quarterly newsletter Imaging Notes.

The photographs are sharp enough to identify objects on the ground about 3 feet in size. Such digital images were once the exclusive domain of U.S. technical intelligence agencies, but in recent years, commercial companies have deployed equally capable space-based cameras.

Disclosure of the underground bases supports analyses of Pentagon and intelligence officials who say China is engaged in a secret military buildup that threatens U.S. interests, while stating publicly that its forces pose no threat. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said during a trip to China in October that Beijing was sending "mixed signals" by building up forces in secret and without explaining their purpose.

Adm. Gary Roughead, commander of the Navy's Pacific Fleet, said he did not consider China "a threat." But he also said in a speech Tuesday that China's purpose behind its rapid military buildup is not fully known. "That's a little unclear," he said, noting that "increased transparency" is needed from China.

The photographs included several shots of Chinese H-6 strategic bombers and related aerial refueling tankers at Dangyang airfield in Hubei province. Also, 70 nuclear-capable Qian-5 aircraft were photographed parked at an airfield in Jianqiao, Zhejiang province, on the East China Sea coast.

The Pentagon's four-year strategy report made public earlier this month stated that China is emerging as a power with "the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States." The report stated that Beijing is investing heavily in "strategic arsenal and capabilities to project power beyond its borders."

The report did not provide specifics. U.S. officials said, however, that the secrecy of the Chinese buildup has fueled a debate within the U.S. government over the threat posed by that country.

U.S. intelligence agencies recently produced a National Intelligence Estimate, or major interagency analysis, that concluded China is using strategic deception to fool the United States and other nations about its goals and programs, including its military buildup.

Pentagon officials have asked China to allow visits to underground facilities such as the submarine tunnel and a command center in Beijing, but either the requests were denied or the existence of the sites was denied.

"The Chinese have denied having any underground submarine facilities," the Pentagon official said, noting that the satellite photos indicate that China has misled the United States.

Underground submarine sites are one of 10 major types of facilities hidden by the Chinese military, U.S. officials said. The others include nuclear missile storage facilities, other weapons plants, command centers and political leadership offices.

In 2004, China revealed the first of a new class of submarines. The development of the Yuan-class submarines was kept secret through the use of an underground factory in south-central China, the officials said.

Since 2002, Beijing has deployed 14 submarines. And it is working on a new ballistic-missile submarine, known as the Jin class, and two new Shang-class attack submarines.

According to a classified Defense Intelligence Agency assessment, China's nuclear forces include about 45 long-range missiles, 12 submarine-launched missiles and about 100 short-range missiles each with a single warhead.

By 2020, China's arsenal will include up to 220 long-range missiles, up to 44 submarine-launched missiles and up to 200 short-range missiles, the DIA report stated.

Richard Fisher, a China military analyst at the International Assessment and Strategy Center, said that in addition to the northern submarine base, China also has a major submarine base at Yulin, on Hainan island in the South China Sea.

The southern base gives Chinese missile submarines easier access to firing areas than the Yellow Sea base, which is more vulnerable to attacks from U.S. anti-submarine warfare systems.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060216-020211-7960r.htm>

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Washington Post

February 16, 2006

Pg. 1

Rice Asks For \$75 Million To Increase Pressure On Iran

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice asked Congress yesterday to provide \$75 million in emergency funding to step up pressure on the Iranian government, including expanding radio and television broadcasts into Iran and promoting internal opposition to the rule of religious leaders.

The request would substantially boost the money devoted to confronting Iran -- only \$10 million is budgeted to support dissidents in 2006 -- and signals a new effort by the Bush administration to persuade other nations to join the United States in a coalition to bolster Iranian activists, halt Iran's funding of terrorism and stem its nuclear ambitions, State Department officials said.

"The United States will actively confront the policies of this Iranian regime, and at the same time we are going to work to support the aspirations of the Iranian people for freedom in their own country," Rice told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at a hearing on the administration's foreign affairs budget.

Iranian officials announced this week that they have begun enriching uranium, a step that appears likely to ensure that the country's nuclear program will be discussed by the U.N. Security Council next month. But U.S. officials despair that any action by the council will be slow and deliberate, so yesterday's effort appears to be part of a sustained campaign to enlist other countries to act against Iran even sooner.

Rice will travel to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates next week in part to discuss the "strategic challenge to the world represented by the Iranian regime," the State Department said. Another senior official, Undersecretary R. Nicholas Burns, also will discuss Iran next week with his counterparts in the Group of Eight industrialized nations. Officials will also seek to coordinate strategy on Iran with NATO members.

Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kan.), who has called for \$100 million to promote democracy in Iran, applauded the initiative as the "absolutely right move at this point in time." Although some Iranian activists have criticized the administration for moving too slowly to support them, Brownback said the administration had been "very methodical" in fighting terrorism. "The first step was Afghanistan, then Iraq, and now you're seeing an increasing focus on Iran."

But Martin S. Indyk, a Clinton administration official who now heads the Saban Center on Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, said the democratic forces the administration wants to support have failed in the past to take on the clerics and have little basis of support -- and would be tainted by U.S. aid. "It's hard to see how \$75 million makes a dent in that political reality," Indyk said.

The Clinton administration, under pressure from Congress, tried to assist such groups in the 1990s, Indyk said, but Iran interpreted the effort as an attempt to overthrow the government and responded by funding a series of terrorist attacks in Israel.

Rice told lawmakers that because the Iranians have begun enriching uranium, "they have crossed a point where they are in open defiance of the international community." Rice said the United States has a "menu of options" available to punish Iran, adding: "You will see us trying to walk a fine line in actions we take."

Under the proposed supplemental request for the fiscal 2006 budget, the administration would use \$50 million of the new funds to significantly increase Farsi broadcasts into Iran, mainly satellite television broadcasting by the federal government and broadcasts of the U.S.-funded Radio Farda, to build the capacity to broadcast 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

An additional \$15 million would go to Iranian labor unions, human rights activists and other groups, generally via nongovernmental organizations and democracy groups such as the National Endowment for Democracy. The administration has already budgeted \$10 million for such activity but is only just beginning to spend the \$3.5 million appropriated in 2005 for this purpose.

Officials said \$5 million will be used to foster Iranian student exchanges -- which have plummeted since the 1979 Iranian Revolution -- and another \$5 million will be aimed at reaching the Iranian public through the Internet and building independent Farsi television and radio stations.

State Department officials, briefing reporters about the plan on the condition of anonymity to avoid upstaging Rice, said they saw an opportunity to enlist support against Iran because of intemperate statements by Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, that have called for the elimination of Israel and expressed doubt about the Holocaust.

The United States has no relations with Tehran, but one official said the United States hopes to capitalize on the "disturbing trend of Iranian diplomacy" since Ahmadinejad's election, including the refusal to continue negotiations on the nuclear program. He said the administration would press countries that have ties to "begin to think what they can do to push back against what has been a radical series of proposals out of the government of Iran."

The officials sidestepped questions about whether the administration is seeking "regime change." One official said the United States is pursuing a "hard-headed" diplomatic track in which it hopes the policies of Iran will change and "people who support democracy" will be strengthened. A second official cited the 1980 uprising in Poland by the

Solidarity labor movement, which toppled the communist government, as a model for the kind of movement the administration hopes to foster.

The officials acknowledged that aiding activists and dissidents in Iran may be difficult and could expose them to retribution, so they said the aid will probably be provided without much fanfare.

At the hearing, Rice won bipartisan praise for her handling of negotiations on Iran's nuclear programs, but lawmakers from both parties raised objections to the overall thrust of the administration's Middle East policy. At one point, Sen. Lincoln D. Chafee (R-R.I.) blamed the administration for the victory of Hamas in last month's Palestinian legislative elections. "The whole year, 2005, nothing was done, opportunities missed, and now we have a very, very disastrous situation of a terrorist organization winning an election," Chafee asserted.

Rice acknowledged the victory of Hamas is "a difficult moment" in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, but she said it was due to a backlash against the ruling party, not a failure of U.S. policy.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/15/AR2006021500672.html>

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Los Angeles Times

February 17, 2006

Pg. 1

Niger Uranium Rumors Wouldn't Die

By Bob Drogin and Tom Hamburger, Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — In the spring of 2001, long before Sept. 11 and the American focus on Iraq, the CIA asked its Paris station about rumors that 200 tons of nuclear material had vanished from two French-owned mines in the West African nation of Niger.

"We heard stories this stuff had gone to Iraq, or to Syria, or Libya, or China or North Korea. We heard all kinds of stories," said a now-retired CIA officer.

But the CIA soon concluded that a French-run consortium maintained strict control over stockpiles of uranium ore in Niger, a former French colony, and that none had been illegally diverted.

"Everything was accounted for," the former spy said. "Case closed."

Hardly.

Over the next two years, other U.S. intelligence, military and diplomatic officials in cities across Europe sent Washington a growing stream of cables and reports suggesting that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was seeking uranium from Niger.

Experienced intelligence officers repeatedly knocked down those reports, sometimes after painstaking inquiry.

But like the carnival game "Whack-a-Mole," similar reports kept popping back up in different places. The unconfirmed reports were embraced by the White House, which began to repeatedly warn that Iraq was trying to build nuclear weapons.

Those warnings in turn played a crucial role in sending America to war. They also sparked a political and intelligence scandal that still roils the Bush administration.

A review by the Los Angeles Times of those seemingly independent intelligence reports leads to the conclusion that they were based on information contained in forged documents that an Italian ex-spy was trying to sell to Western intelligence agencies in 2001 and 2002.

The story refused to die for several reasons, including a strong appetite in the Pentagon and the White House for information that supported a case for war, and a widely recognized phenomenon in the intelligence field in which bad information, when repeated by multiple sources, appears to be corroborated.

"This became a classic case of circular reporting," said a U.S. intelligence official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to talk to reporters. "It seemed like we were hearing it from lots of places. People didn't realize it was the same bad information coming in different doors."

In January 2003, President Bush said in his State of the Union speech that the British government had learned that Iraq "had recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa." Two months later, U.S. and allied troops invaded Iraq.

Paul Pillar, who retired last year after 30 years at the CIA, said that the White House attributed the charge to the British because the CIA wouldn't vouch for it.

"U.S. analysts said it was just too squishy to use publicly," said Pillar, who was national intelligence officer for the Near East and South Asia. But administration officials, he said, viewed the unconfirmed charge as "juicy" and easy to understand. "The public says, 'Saddam is buying uranium?' That has simplicity and appeal."

Among those surprised by the president's inclusion of the allegation in his speech was former Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV, whom the CIA had sent to Niger a year earlier to investigate the alleged uranium sale. He had found

little evidence of it. Months after the president's speech, Wilson publicly charged that the White House "twisted" intelligence on the issue.

The White House withdrew the charge that summer after CIA officials again concluded there was no solid evidence to support it. Wilson's Niger assignment, it now appears, also was based on information contained in the forged documents.

Wilson's criticism was followed by the leak of the identity of an undercover CIA officer, Valerie Plame, who is Wilson's wife. An investigation into the leak led to a federal grand jury indictment in October of Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, for alleged perjury and obstruction of justice. The investigation continues.

Niger, an impoverished nation on the western edge of the Sahara desert, is the world's third largest producer of uranium. A French-run consortium, Cogema, controls the only two mines and trucks all the ore south to the distant port of Cotonou in neighboring Benin for export to France, Spain and Japan.

French intelligence agencies monitor the trade closely. Thus French officials were concerned when the CIA first asked in 2001 about rumors that 200 tons of lightly refined uranium ore — known as yellowcake — had disappeared. Alain Chouet, who headed the weapons proliferation and terrorism division in France's DGSE spy service, quickly confirmed that the uranium supplies were secure.

That October, shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the CIA heard from another intelligence service that officials in Niamey, capital of Niger, had agreed to "ship several tons of uranium to Iraq," according to a 2004 report by the Senate Intelligence Committee.

In February 2002, the CIA received a second, more detailed report from the same spy service. It provided "verbatim text" of a deal allegedly signed by Niger and Iraq. The Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency followed a week later with a report titled: "Niamey signed an agreement to sell 500 tons of uranium a year to Baghdad."

The DIA did not assess the credibility of the information. But some intelligence analysts were impressed and noted that the text of the alleged agreement matched earlier intelligence showing that an Algerian businessman had arranged a trip to Niger by the Iraqi ambassador to the Vatican, Wissam al-Zahawi, in February 1999.

The Pentagon report quickly drew the attention of Cheney, who asked his CIA briefer for more information.

The agency responded by sending Wilson, a retired diplomat who previously had gone to Niger for the CIA, to Niamey in February 2002. The CIA didn't send its own operative because the agency considered it "a wild goose chase," said a former senior intelligence official.

Before his departure, Wilson was called to CIA headquarters in Langley, Va., and asked to check on a specific transaction: an agreement to transfer 500 tons of uranium yellowcake to Iraq. The information appears to have been identical to that contained in the forged "sales agreement."

Wilson and the U.S. ambassador to Niger concluded that a sale, although possible, was highly unlikely.

The State Department's intelligence wing, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, also judged the sale "unlikely," according to a recently declassified report obtained by Judicial Watch, an independent public interest group in Washington.

Moving the yellowcake would require "25 hard-to-conceal 10-ton tractor trailers," the analysts wrote. "Because Niger is landlocked, the convoy would have to cross at least one international border and travel at least 1,000 miles to reach the sea."

The same former senior intelligence official said the deal "didn't make any sense."

"It was a French-owned mine, so any Nigerien government deal would have to go through the French company," he said. "Secondly, the size of the sale would have an impact on the national economy. The number of trucks would have been at record highs. They couldn't do it secretly."

There were other problems. The French had recently closed off access to one of the two mines in Niger by filling it with rubble — meaning far less uranium was potentially available. Plus, Iraq already had 500 tons of yellowcake — about 1,000 large drums — under seal by departed U.N. nuclear inspectors, and no facilities to process it.

"It just seemed nutty on the surface," David Albright, a former U.N. nuclear inspector in Iraq, said of the alleged scheme. "Yellowcake was the one thing Iraq didn't need to go out and buy. And they would go a different route [to enrich uranium] if they were really going to reconstitute a nuclear program."

But the story had still more legs.

The CIA issued a third report in March 2002, again based on the unidentified foreign spy service, warning of the scheme to smuggle uranium to Iraq. For the first time, the CIA noted an oddity: The supposed sales agreement named a date as Wednesday that was actually a Friday.

Spurred by the Bush administration, the CIA station in Paris again approached French intelligence in mid-2002.

Chouet's staff noticed then that the agency's more precise questions — about Iraq's purchase of 500 tons of yellowcake after a 1999 meeting — matched details in documents peddled by a low-level Italian ex-spy. The man,

Rocco Martino, had offered to sell the documents for \$100,000 to the French intelligence station chief from Brussels earlier in 2002.

Martino, a white-haired, dapper man with a mustache and a military bearing, was known in Italy and Western Europe as a "security consultant" with access to intelligence tidbits useful to foreign governments and journalists. "He came to us and others on his own during this period, frequently trying to sell bits of intelligence he could get from former colleagues in the Italian service about the former Yugoslavia," Chouet recalled.

The French were suspicious this time, he said, because nuclear smuggling was outside Martino's "usual field" of competence.

For a small fee, Martino allowed the French to review the sales agreement and accompanying documentation. Immediately, technicians for the French spy service concluded they were dealing with forged papers.

The sales agreement was stamped with a Niger government seal stolen along with stationery and other items from the Niger Embassy in Rome the previous January, Chouet recalled. There were other discrepancies, and the French rejected the papers as fake, returned them to Martino, and refused to pay his fee.

Because the CIA requests were urgent, Chouet dispatched a five- or six-man team of investigators to Niger to double-check. They found no evidence of a sale.

But the Defense Intelligence Agency and the vice president's office continued to talk with confidence about Iraq's pursuit of nuclear materials.

In September 2002, the DIA published an assessment that said "Iraq has been vigorously trying to procure uranium ore and yellowcake." Later that month, the British published a report on Iraq's pursuit of weapons that said "there is intelligence that Iraq has sought the supply of significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

The CIA was dubious. John E. McLaughlin, the agency's deputy director, told the Senate Intelligence Committee that he thought the British had "stretched a little ... about Iraq seeking uranium" from Africa. "We've looked at those reports," he said. "And we don't think they are very credible."

In October, Martino, still peddling the alleged sales agreement, offered it to Elisabetta Burba, a reporter for the Italian magazine Panorama, for about \$18,000.

Burba's editor told her to ask U.S. authorities if they were authentic, so she went to the U.S. Embassy in Rome and gave photocopied letters, shipping records, government cables and other papers to the State Department officer who coordinates regional security.

"He's the one that wrote reports on the documents that got into U.S. channels," said the former CIA officer.

The State Department passed copies to the CIA as well as to nuclear experts at the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Energy Department and the National Security Agency in Washington. No one apparently checked to see if the names, dates or other details were accurate.

Martino declined to speak to The Times. He has told others he got the file from a woman at the Niger Embassy in Rome who worked with Italian intelligence, and assumed it was genuine. He said he only learned in late 2002 that the documents were forged.

"At that juncture, the beans had been spilled," Martino told Milan's *Il Giornale* newspaper. "The file was circulating, the reports contained in it were going around the world, and Bush and [British Prime Minister Tony] Blair were talking about those documents albeit without actually mentioning them. I turned the television on and I did not believe my ears."

In late October 2002, the CIA faxed a memo to the White House deputy national security advisor, Stephen Hadley, asking that a reference to African uranium be removed from a presidential speech on Iraq.

"Remove the sentence because the amount is in dispute and it is debatable whether it can be acquired from the source," the CIA wrote. "We told Congress that the Brits have exaggerated this issue."

Despite such cautions, top U.S. officials, including then-Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and then-national security advisor Condoleezza Rice continued that fall to make public references to a possible uranium transfer.

In late November, another uranium report hit Washington.

This time, a special agent from the U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service, working counterintelligence operations in the French port of Marseilles, had received a phone call from a West African businessman. The caller said 20 barrels of Niger yellowcake were in a warehouse in Cotonou awaiting shipment to Iraq.

The Navy report ultimately reached the CIA, which contacted a French internal security agency, the DST, as well as French intelligence. They sent another team to Africa to check the warehouse and other sites.

"They both gave assurances from the French government that the material sitting in the port was under French control and wasn't going anywhere else," the former CIA officer said.

The U.S. defense attaché based in Abidjan, capital of Ivory Coast, visited the warehouse in December and saw it "appeared to contain only bales of cotton," Senate investigators found.

Despite such evidence, the Defense Intelligence Agency would continue to cite the original Navy report as late as June 2003.

In December 2002, then-United Nations Ambassador John D. Negroponte, now the director of National Intelligence, charged publicly that Iraq had sought to buy uranium from Africa. The State Department staff that helped prepare Negroponte's presentation ignored strongly worded cautions from department intelligence officers and distributed a fact sheet stating that Iraq had made "efforts to procure uranium from Niger."

Negroponte's remarks were followed by Bush's State of the Union speech, which attributed the information solely to British intelligence.

Meanwhile, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog group in Vienna, had been asking London and Washington for months for substantiation of official U.S. and British reports that publicly accused Iraq of seeking uranium for nuclear weapons.

In February 2003, U.S. officials gave the IAEA copies of the documents that Burba had provided. Several days later, Jacques Baute, who headed the energy agency's Iraq nuclear verification office, did a keyword search on Google to check a reference in the papers.

"What struck me was I had a letter from the president of Niger from 2000 referring to Niger's Constitution of 1965," Baute said. "And I got a newspaper article that showed Niger had changed its Constitution in 1999. At that point, I completely changed the focus of my search to 'Are these documents real?' rather than 'How can I catch the Iraqis?' " Baute and his staff determined that many of the names, dates, titles and other data were wrong. On March 7, Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the IAEA, told the U.N. Security Council that the documents were "not authentic." Two weeks later, the invasion of Iraq began. Two weeks after that, the National Intelligence Council, representing all U.S. intelligence agencies, issued a "Sense of the Community Memorandum" finally admitting the intelligence error, according to the Senate report.

"We judge it highly unlikely that Niamey has sold uranium yellowcake to Baghdad in recent years," the memo said. The documents "are a fabrication" and the various other reports that flooded in "do not constitute credible evidence of a recent or impending sale."

A separate CIA report that month acknowledged it had relied on reports from another spy service that were "based on forged documents" and were "unreliable." Its notice to CIA stations said "the foreign government service may have been provided with fraudulent reporting."

U.S. intelligence agencies have not determined who forged the documents. Officials believe the motive was financial gain, not politics, and a stalled investigation by the FBI into the forgery has been restarted.

It is also unclear why British intelligence has not withdrawn its claim that Iraq had sought uranium in Africa.

British intelligence officials have said their information was based on more than one source, and that they didn't see the forged documents until March 2003. A British parliamentary report later concluded the British analysis was "credible."

But Martino told Rome's La Repubblica newspaper last fall that Italy's spy service had "transmitted the yellowcake dossier" to British intelligence but "didn't want its involvement in the operation to be known." Italian authorities have denied any role in forging the papers or disseminating them.

Skeptical members of the British Parliament have continued to challenge their government's conclusion, pointing to contradictions in the British explanation and a reluctance to release information that would support it.

British officials told the IAEA that they could not share the intelligence because it came from another government. The British also refused to provide the raw intelligence to the CIA, several U.S. officials said.

"They never turned over anything to us," said another former senior U.S. intelligence official. "Never. They absolutely refused to tell us. Believe me, we asked."

After the invasion of Iraq, the CIA-led Iraq Survey Group concluded Hussein's regime had abandoned its nuclear weapons program in 1991. They found no evidence that Iraq sought to buy uranium after that date.

Times staff writers Peter Wallsten in Washington and Tracy Wilkinson in Rome contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-na-niger17feb17,1,764807.story>

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Washington Post

February 17, 2006

Pg. 13

Iran Working On Nuclear Arms Plan, France Says

Official Rejects Claim About Civilian Program

By Molly Moore, Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Feb. 16 -- France accused Iran on Thursday of developing a secret military nuclear program, one of the strongest public allegations yet against Tehran by a European nation.

"No civilian nuclear program can explain the Iranian nuclear program," Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said in an interview with France 2 television. "So it is a clandestine military nuclear program." Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, responded on Iranian state television by repeating the country's assertion that its nuclear program was aimed at meeting energy needs. "We want civilian nuclear energy," Larijani said. "We don't want to have the bomb."

The French foreign minister launched his attack two days after Iranian officials confirmed they had resumed uranium enrichment research in defiance of international mandates. His accusations were part of an escalation in rhetoric and international lobbying efforts by both Iran and its antagonists in advance of a scheduled March 6 meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency that could set the course for potential political or economic actions against Iran.

Until recently, the United States had taken the hardest line against Iran and its nuclear program. But West European nations, frustrated at a breakdown in more than two years of negotiations between Iran and a group known as the EU3 -- France, Britain and Germany -- have become increasingly stern in their comments.

Moscow also added a warning Thursday, threatening to withdraw its proposal to enrich Iran's uranium in Russia unless the Islamic republic agreed to cease its own enrichment program. Representatives of the two countries are scheduled to meet Monday to discuss the proposal, though both sides have attempted to dampen hopes for a breakthrough.

"When confidence in the Iranian nuclear program is reestablished . . . we could come back to the possible implementation of the right that Iran has to develop a nuclear energy sector full scale," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday.

On Wednesday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited the Natanz nuclear facility where the uranium enrichment facilities are located, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

"What enemies fear is not production of the atomic bomb, because in today's world atomic bombs are not efficient," IRNA quoted Ahmadinejad as saying on the visit. "The main fear and concern of enemies is the self-reliance and knowledge of the Iranian nation and the fact that Iranian youth are acquiring peaceful nuclear technology." Iran suspended its enrichment program in October 2003 under international pressure. But with negotiations deteriorating between Tehran and European representatives, it announced last month it had broken seals on equipment needed to restart the work. European officials severed negotiations, and the IAEA reported "serious concerns" about Iran's nuclear intentions to the U.N. Security Council.

Members of the Security Council agreed to delay any action on the IAEA report until after the agency's March 6 meeting in hopes that Iran would back off from threats to restart its enrichment program. The IAEA now is scheduled to receive a new report that will include confirmation that engineers in Iran resumed the nuclear enrichment program last weekend, according to diplomats in Vienna.

"The international community has sent a very firm message in telling the Iranians to return to reason and suspend all nuclear activity and the enrichment and conversion of uranium," France's Douste-Blazy said. "But they aren't listening to us."

"Now it is up to the Security Council to say what it will do, what means it will use to stop, to manage, to halt this terrible crisis of nuclear proliferation caused by Iran," Douste-Blazy said.

In the past several days, Iranian officials have begun bracing the public for possible diplomatic, political or economic sanctions.

"The Iranian nation is brave enough to stand against any threats posed by the enemies," Interior Minister Mostafa Pour Mohammadi said Thursday in a speech to Iran's Basij volunteer military forces, IRNA reported. "If the enemies resort to the language of force in dealing with the Iranian nation, there is no doubt they will face strong reaction from our nation."

Iran is also lobbying foreign governments. In a message to Chinese officials printed in the English-language China Daily, Iran's charge d'affaires in Beijing, Farhad Assadi, stressed ties between the two countries and cited the "great potential for cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels."

Assadi wrote that trade between Iran and China totaled more than \$10 billion last year.

China is one of the five permanent Security Council members and has been one of the most reluctant to support any action against Iran.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/16/AR2006021601090.html>

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New York Times

February 18, 2006

Iran Hints At Compromise On Nuclear Inspections

By Steven R. Weisman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17 — A senior Iranian envoy, making a new bid to resolve the impasse over his country's nuclear program, was quoted Friday as saying Iran would allow the resumption of spot international inspections of its nuclear facilities if it could continue limited uranium enrichment.

But the offer was immediately dismissed by a senior American official.

The Iranian offer appeared to be addressed to a demand from Britain, France and Germany that Iran ratify an additional protocol of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that would allow for surprise inspections. Iran began following the protocol in 2003 but suspended the inspections this month after the International Atomic Energy Agency voted to refer its case to the United Nations Security Council.

The offer came in the form of a statement from the Iranian Embassy in Paris, according to Reuters.

A senior State Department official said the United States and its allies continued to insist that the only solution to the impasse is a full suspension of uranium conversion and enrichment, which they see as a crucial step in the manufacture of nuclear weapons.

The next critical moment in talks with Iran will occur next week, when Iranian officials meet with Russian officials to discuss a Russian offer to allow Iran to enrich uranium on Russian territory, so that the process cannot be used to cover up a weapons program.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said earlier in the week that the United States had begun discussing possible sanctions against Iran if it did not give up its uranium activities, but that these would not be formally debated until the Security Council takes up the issue next month.

Earlier this week, Iran announced that it had begun enriching uranium in defiance of Western demands, and European and American leaders denounced Tehran for walking away from negotiations over its nuclear program.

The French foreign minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, said Thursday that Iran was pursuing a weapons program.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/18/politics/18iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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International Herald Tribune

February 18, 2006

Europeans Reaffirm Diplomacy With Iran

By Judy Dempsey

BERLIN--Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain said Friday that they would pursue a diplomatic track with Iran over its nuclear program but were considering what steps to take after next month's meeting of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Their meeting coincided with a toughening of language by the Europeans and the United States in response to Iran's decision last month to resume its uranium enrichment program. But, at the same time, Iran hinted at some kind of diplomatic solution to keep the issue from going to the Security Council.

Ali Larijani, Iran's chief negotiator, asked the West to allow Iran "the use of modern centrifuges as proposed by certain American and British scientists which only permit limited enrichment." He made the remarks Thursday to a radio station, France Inter, and the Iranian Embassy in Paris circulated them Friday.

If certain guarantees were made, he said, Iran would be willing to ask its Parliament to ratify a protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which gave the IAEA greater powers to inspect suspicious nuclear facilities.

Larijani's remarks were made after the French foreign minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy, for the first time explicitly accused Iran of using its nuclear program as a cover for clandestine military nuclear activity.

Doust-Blazy said on French television: "No civil nuclear program can explain the Iranian nuclear program. It is a clandestine military nuclear program."

Tehran has denied similar claims, and on Friday it stuck to that position. "Nuclear technology is our red line and we will never abandon our legitimate right to this technology," Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, who heads Iran's top legislative watchdog group, told worshippers at Friday prayers in Tehran, Reuters reported.

He echoed Merkel's earlier remark that Iran had crossed "a red line" when it announced last month that it would resume nuclear work.

This week Iran restarted work at its pilot enrichment plant at Natanz after a two-and-a-half year suspension.

The talks between Merkel and Blair in Berlin on Friday were dominated largely by Iran and the recent victory by Hamas in the Palestinians' parliamentary elections. Regarding Iran, Blair said the issue should be tackled "strongly, but through diplomatic means."

Merkel has taken an increasingly tough line on Iran, particularly in response to comments by its hard-line president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, that the Holocaust was a myth and that Israel should be wiped off the map. While careful not to become embroiled in any discussion about a military solution to the nuclear threat posed by Iran, she has

called for the international community to apply maximum pressure on Tehran, which she said was not living up to its international obligations and was a source of instability in the region.

The Bush administration, however, has refused to rule out the use of force if Iran does not comply with international diplomatic efforts to curb its nuclear program.

Although Blair and Merkel did not comment publicly Friday about Douste-Blazy's accusation, the German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said he shared his French counterpart's view. But Steinmeier acknowledged that such suspicions had yet to be confirmed by the IAEA. The agency's director, Mohamed ElBaradei, is scheduled to present a new report on Iran during its meeting March 6 in Vienna.

"The relevant report from ElBaradei will come on March 6, and until then we have to work on the basis of a suspicion," Steinmeier said after a meeting with the NATO secretary general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.

Diplomats involved in negotiations with Iran said that Britain, France and Germany, the three European countries leading the negotiations, and the United States had been considering what steps to take if Iran showed no signs of abandoning its uranium enrichment program or allowing snap inspections of its sites. It banned those inspections earlier this year.

A senior diplomat, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said Friday, "Next steps could mean some sort of sanctions. You would automatically come to this. But what is crucial at the moment is to keep the international community together."

He said that sanctions could involve imposing a travel ban and freezing bank accounts. Economic sanctions are not yet an option, partly because it was unlikely they would be supported by Russia and China, two of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council.

Merkel last week telephoned President Vladimir Putin of Russia as part of Germany's efforts to maintain a united diplomatic front and exert maximum pressure on Iran, although diplomats acknowledged such pressure had not yielded results.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/02/17/news/blair.php>

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Los Angeles Times

February 17, 2006

Bioterrorism, Hyped

By Milton Leitenberg

THE UNITED STATES has spent at least \$33 billion since 2002 to combat the threat of biological terrorism. The trouble is, the risk that terrorists will use biological agents is being systematically and deliberately exaggerated. And the U.S. government has been using most of its money to prepare for the wrong contingency.

A pandemic flu outbreak of the kind the world witnessed in 1918-19 could kill hundreds of millions of people. The only lethal biological attack in the United States — the anthrax mailings — killed five. But the annual budget for combating bioterror is more than \$7 billion, while Congress just passed a \$3.8-billion emergency package to prepare for a flu outbreak.

The exaggeration of the bioterror threat began more than a decade ago after the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo group released sarin gas in the Tokyo subways in 1995. The scaremongering has grown more acute since 9/11 and the mailing of anthrax-laced letters to Congress and media outlets in the fall of 2001. Now an edifice of institutes, programs and publicists with a vested interest in hyping the bioterror threat has grown, funded by the government and by foundations.

Last year, for example, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist described bioterrorism as "the greatest existential threat we have in the world today." But how could he justify such a claim? Is bioterrorism a greater existential threat than global climate change, global poverty levels, wars and conflicts, nuclear proliferation, ocean-quality deterioration, deforestation, desertification, depletion of freshwater aquifers or the balancing of population growth and food production? Is it likely to kill more people than the more mundane scourges of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, measles and cholera, which kill more than 11 million people each year?

So what substantiates the alarm and the massive federal spending on bioterrorism? There are two main sources of bioterrorism threats: first, from countries developing bioweapons, and second, from terrorist groups that might buy, steal or manufacture them.

The first threat is declining. U.S. intelligence estimates say the number of countries that conduct offensive bioweapons programs has fallen in the last 15 years from 13 to nine, as South Africa, Libya, Iraq and Cuba were dropped. There is no publicly available evidence that even the most hostile of the nine remaining countries — Syria and Iran — are ramping up their programs.

And, despite the fear that a hostile nation could help terrorists get biological weapons, no country has ever done so — even nations known to have trained terrorists.

It's more difficult to assess the risk of terrorists using bioweapons, especially because the perpetrators of the anthrax mailings have not been identified. If the perpetrators did not have access to assistance, materials or knowledge derived from the U.S. biodefense program, but had developed such sophistication independently, that would change our view of what a terrorist group might be capable of. So far, however, the history of terrorist experimentation with bioweapons has shown that killing large numbers of people isn't as easy as we've been led to believe.

Followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh succeeded in culturing and distributing salmonella in Oregon in 1984, sickening 751 people. Aum Shinrikyo failed in its attempts to obtain, produce and disperse anthrax and botulinum toxin between 1990 and 1994. Al Qaeda tried to develop bioweapons from 1997 until the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, but declassified documents found by U.S. forces outside Kandahar indicate the group never obtained the necessary pathogens.

At a conference in Tokyo this week, bioterrorism experts called for new programs to counter the possibility that terrorists could genetically engineer new pathogens. Yet three of the leading scientists in the field have said there is no likelihood at this time that a terrorist group could perform such a feat.

The real problem is that a decade of widely broadcast discussion of what it takes to produce a bioweapon has provided terrorists with at least a rough roadmap. Until now, no terrorist group has had professionals with the skills to exploit the information — but the publicity may make it easier in the future.

There is no military or strategic justification for imputing to real-world terrorist groups capabilities that they do not possess. Yet no risk analysis was conducted before the \$33 billion was spent.

Some scientists and politicians privately acknowledge that the threat of bioterror attacks is exaggerated, but they argue that spending on bioterrorism prevention and response would be inadequate without it. But the persistent hype is not benign. It is almost certainly the single major factor in provoking interest in bioweapons among terrorist groups. Bin Laden's deputy, the Egyptian doctor Ayman Zawahiri, wrote on a captured floppy disk that "we only became aware of (bioweapons) when the enemy drew our attention to them by repeatedly expressing concerns that they can be produced simply with easily available materials." We are creating our worst nightmare.

MILTON LEITENBERG, a senior research scholar at the University of Maryland, is the author of "Assessing the Biological Weapons and Bioterrorism Threat."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/opinion/la-oe-leitenberg17feb17,1.459115.story>

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London Sunday Telegraph

February 19, 2006

Pg. 1

Iranian Fatwa Approves Use Of Nuclear Weapons

By Colin Freeman and Philip Sherwell

Iran's hardline spiritual leaders have issued an unprecedented new fatwa, or holy order, sanctioning the use of atomic weapons against its enemies.

In yet another sign of Teheran's stiffening resolve on the nuclear issue, influential Muslim clerics have for the first time questioned the theocracy's traditional stance that Sharia law forbade the use of nuclear weapons.

One senior mullah has now said it is "only natural" to have nuclear bombs as a "countermeasure" against other nuclear powers, thought to be a reference to America and Israel.

The pronouncement is particularly worrying because it has come from Mohsen Gharavian, a disciple of the ultra-conservative Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah-Yazdi, who is widely regarded as the cleric closest to Iran's new president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Nicknamed "Professor Crocodile" because of his harsh conservatism, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's group opposes virtually any kind of rapprochement with the West and is believed to have influenced President Ahmadinejad's refusal to negotiate over Iran's nuclear programme.

The comments, which are the first public statement by the Yazdi clerical cabal on the nuclear issue, will be seen as an attempt by the country's religious hardliners to begin preparing a theological justification for the ownership - and if necessary the use - of atomic bombs.

They appeared on Rooz, an internet newspaper run by members of Iran's fractured reformist movement, which picked them up from remarks by Mohsen Gharavian reported on the media agency IraNews.

Rooz reported that Mohsen Gharavian, a lecturer based in a religious school in the holy city of Qom, had declared "for the first time that the use of nuclear weapons may not constitute a problem, according to Sharia."

He also said: "When the entire world is armed with nuclear weapons, it is permissible to use these weapons as a counter-measure. According to Sharia too, only the goal is important."

Mohsen Gharavian did not specify what kinds of "goals" would justify a nuclear strike, but it is thought that any military intervention by the United States would be considered sufficient grounds. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi has previously justified use of suicide bombers against "enemies of Islam" and believes that America is bent on destroying the Islamic republic and its values. The latest insight into the theocracy's thinking comes as the US signals a change in strategy on Iran, after the decision earlier this month to report it to the United Nations Security Council for its resumption of banned nuclear research.

While Washington has made it clear that military strikes on Iran's nuclear sites would be a "last resort", White House officials are also targeting change from within by funding Iranian opposition groups.

The secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, said the Bush administration would seek an extra \$75 million (£43 million) from Congress to help to support Iran's fractured pro-democracy movement and fund Farsi-language satellite broadcasts.

The announcement is the clearest public indication that Washington has adopted a two-track approach to Iran, combining the diplomatic search for a united international condemnation of its illicit nuclear programme with efforts to undermine the regime's status.

The new tactic amounts to the pursuit of regime change by peaceful means, although that phrase is still not stated as official US policy. Washington hopes that a dedicated satellite channel beamed into Iran will encourage domestic dissent, such as the current strike by bus drivers - the most significant display of organised opposition since the 1999 and 2003 student protests.

Ms Rice unveiled the change of tactics a week after a visit to Washington by a senior British delegation that pressed for a co-ordinated Western policy on using satellite television and the internet to bolster internal opposition. The State Department had previously been wary of the two-track strategy.

As the Sunday Telegraph reported last week, Pentagon strategists have been updating plans for a another policy of "last resort" - blitzing Iranian nuclear sites in an effort to stop the regime gaining the atomic bomb.

The bus strike, which has led to the jailing of more than 1,000 drivers, was originally sparked by an industrial dispute over unpaid wages benefits. But the robustness of the state response has indicated the nervousness of the Ahmadinejad regime over any internal dissent.

Reports from Iran say that Massoud Osanlou, the leader of the bus drivers' union, was arrested at his home by members of the Basij, the pro-regime militia, and had part of his tongue cut out as a warning to be quiet.

But the dispute already risks disillusioning Mr Ahmadinejad's core of working class support - among them municipal workers - who voted him into power on his promises to improve the lot of Iran's poor.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/02/19/wiran19.xml>

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New York Daily News

February 19, 2006

Nuke-Armed Iran A Way Off: Experts

By Associated Press

Iran may have an atom bomb within two years, the authoritative Jane's Defense Weekly warned - a prediction that came in 1984.

In 1988, the world was again put on notice, this time by Iraq, that Tehran was at the nuclear threshold. In 1992, the CIA foresaw atomic arms in Iranian hands by 2000, though the U.S. later pushed that back to 2003.

By 1997, the Israelis confidently predicted 2005.

Now, as 2006 wears on and a global focus sharpens on Iran's nuclear ambitions, the coming of a doomsday arsenal seems years away, experts said. Past predictions apparently underplayed the technological challenges of a bomb program.

Although Iranian officials said last week that scientists had begun enriching small amounts of uranium, Iran denies it's intended to produce anything beyond weaker fuel for civilian nuclear power plants, not the highly enriched uranium that can fuel a bomb.

The UN Security Council is expected to take up the issue next month, and there may be a push for sanctions. But few specialists view a potential Iranian bomb as an imminent threat.

In fact, the latest estimate from the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies sees no Iranian bomb before the next decade. Israeli defense experts agree, now speaking of a 2012 date.

"It's a very complicated process requiring precision from design and engineering to manufacture and installation, and there's a lot of room for problems," said Corey Hinderstein of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington.

Enrichment occurs in vast arrays of centrifuges, cylinders of strong but superlight materials up to 6 feet tall and several inches wide into which uranium gas is fed. Each of these "rotors," with just a few milligrams of gas, spins at up to 70,000 revolutions per minute - separating heavier uranium-238 from the rarer U-235, the isotope that can fission to produce energy.

Pumped through thousands of cylinders, the mixture's content is gradually boosted to more than 3% U-235, the level needed for power generators. But if extended, the process can produce 90% enriched uranium, the stuff of bombs. Scientists said poor-quality centrifuges vibrate, shatter and fail regularly. Hinderstein calculates that, at its last known assembly rate of about 100 per month, Iran would take years to install thousands of centrifuges.

Also, too many impurities remain in the gas produced from processed uranium ore at Iran's conversion facility, the magazine Science said last month, quoting an unidentified U.S. official.

"Having the capability to build weapons doesn't mean that they will build nuclear weapons," said a Turkish researcher, an expert on Iran's nuclear work. "This is an issue yet to be decided by Iran's [Muslim] leadership."

http://www.nydailynews.com/news/wn_report/story/392641p-332976c.html

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CNN.com

On tape, Hussein talks of WMDs

Former Iraqi leader heard saying he warned U.S. of terrorism

Sunday, February 19, 2006 Posted: 1742 GMT (0142 HKT)

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein told his Cabinet in the mid-1990s that the U.S. would fall victim to terrorists possessing weapons of mass destruction but that Iraq would not be involved, tapes released Saturday at an intelligence summit reveal.

Hussein also can be heard speaking with high-ranking Iraqi officials about deceiving United Nations inspectors looking into Iraq's weapons program, which his son-in-law, Lt. Gen. Hussein Kamel, oversaw.

The tapes, which U.S. officials have confirmed are authentic, are part of a much larger cache of information on the nation's weapons programs. Six translators listened to the recordings for CNN. ([Watch how the tapes show Hussein discussed terrorism with Cabinet -- 2:46](#))

Former U.N. weapons inspector Bill Tierney, who translated the tapes for the FBI, provided the recordings to a nongovernmental meeting in Arlington, Virginia, called Intelligence Summit 2006.

U.S. officials who have reviewed the tapes said Hussein was "fixated" on acquiring weapons of mass destruction and preventing U.N. inspectors from finding out.

On the tapes, Kamel and Hussein discuss whether Iraq should disclose information about its biological weapons program to U.N. inspectors. Iraq had previously denied having any such program.

"The question becomes, do we have to disclose everything or continue to keep silent?" Kamel said to Hussein. "I think it would be in our interest not to, because we don't want the world to know about what we possess because it has become clear to the countries who are forced to be allies of the U.S. that our position is untenable."

Kamel defected to Jordan in August 1995, the highest ranking member of Saddam's inner circle to do so. He returned to Iraq in February 1996 and was executed on the orders of Saddam's son, Uday.

The date of the recording is not known. But Kamel told CNN in September 1995: "No, Iraq does not possess any weapons of mass destruction. I am being completely honest about this."

Kamel acknowledged that he was told to keep secrets from U.N. inspectors.

"The order was to hide much of it from the start, and we hid a lot of that information, he told CNN. "These were not individual acts of concealment but as a result of direct orders from the top."

In another recording, an unidentified man tells Hussein that the U.N. weapons inspections are meaningless because the regime still maintains the intent and the technical knowledge to reconstitute its weapons programs.

"Sir, they cannot deprive us our will, and despite the pressures they bring to bear on us through monitoring, and despite the fact we were not able to put to use our missile technology, the time is not their side," the unidentified man said.

"No matter how much they take from us, the factories will be in our brains and souls, and the people who can make missiles out of stones and use them with success in four days can certainly achieve a great deal in one, two, or five years."

He tells Hussein "when it comes to time, they will be the losers."

Hussein also said on one of the tapes that he warned British and U.S. officials of an imminent attack employing weapons of mass destruction.

"Terrorism is coming. I told the Americans a long time before August 2 and I told the British as well, I think," Hussein tells then-Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. "I told them that in the future there will be terrorism with weapons of mass destruction."

He added, however, that Iraq would have no part in it. August 2 is believed to be a reference to the date of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which sparked the Gulf War the following year.

"This is coming. This story is coming, but not from Iraq," Hussein said.

Aziz is currently in U.S. custody and facing charges of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

A U.S. official said the tapes "do not change the story" on Saddam's weapons programs in any substantive way.

"We already knew he had them in the early '90s and wanted to get them again after he lost them but was not able to," the official said.

A spokeswoman for Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte said the tapes were "fascinating," but they "do not reveal anything that changes their postwar analysis of Iraq's weapons programs, nor do they change the findings contained in the comprehensive Iraq Survey Group report."

The Survey Group report, written by Charles Duelfer and published in October 2004, concluded that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction when the United States invaded in March of 2003, but the regime intended to resume its WMD programs once U.N. sanctions were lifted.

Of the tapes, Duelfer said, "The tapes tend to reinforce, confirm, and to a certain extent, provide a bit more detail, the conclusions which we brought out in the report."

The tapes, which were obtained by the U.S. government sometime after the invasion of Iraq, are part of about 35,000 additional boxes of material on Iraq's weapons programs and efforts, said an aide to House Intelligence Committee Chairman Pete Hoekstra, R-Michigan, who has reviewed the tapes.

The material is awaiting translation, the aide said, and the Bush administration is contemplating making all the material public for journalists and academics to translate and review.

The International Intelligence Summit describes itself on its Web site as a nonpartisan, nonprofit forum that promotes an exchange of ideas among members of the international intelligence community.

The summit's main sponsor is the Michael Cherney Fund, whose Web site describes the fund's main objective as "helping realize the intellectual potential of the post-Soviet emigres to Israel."

The summit Web site states that the group supports the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, which have prompted widespread violence across the globe.

"In solidarity with the people of Denmark and in support of freedom of speech, the Intelligence Summit offers free conference admission to Danish passport holders," it states.

Tierney told ABC News, which first reviewed portions of the tapes, that he provided the tapes to the Intelligence Summit because it is wrong for the U.S. government to keep them from the public.

"Because of my experience being in the inspections and being in the military, I knew the significance of these tapes when I heard them," Tierney told ABC.

Former Justice Department prosecutor John Loftus, the president of the Intelligence Summit with whom Tierney shared the tapes, is now a private attorney and works pro bono "to help hundreds of intelligence agents obtain lawful permission to declassify and publish the hidden secrets of our times," according to Loftus' Web site.

CNN's David Ensor, Octavia Nasr, Justine Redman and David de Sola contributed to this report.

<http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/meast/02/18/hussein.tapes/>

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New York Times

February 21, 2006

Talks On Enriching Nuclear Fuel For Iran In Russia Seem To Stall

By Steven Lee Myers

MOSCOW, Feb. 20 — A Russian effort to forge a compromise over Iran's nuclear program stalled Monday after five hours of talks in the Kremlin ended inconclusively. Negotiators for both countries agreed to hold new talks but did not announce when or where.

The discussions, already delayed several days, focused on the details of Russia's offer to set up a joint venture to enrich uranium in Russia for Iran's nuclear fuel.

But senior officials on both sides played down the prospects of agreement before a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency on March 6 about whether Iran's nuclear program should be forwarded to the United Nations Security Council for possible punitive action.

In Brussels, Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, suggested that even if an agreement with Russia was achieved, it would not resolve the confrontation over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

During meetings with officials of the European Union, Mr. Mottaki said that regardless of Russia's proposal, Iran would continue its nuclear research, which the United States and other countries suspect is intended to develop nuclear weapons.

Javier Solana, the European Union's senior diplomat for foreign policy, who met Monday with Mr. Mottaki, said, "The ideas on the nuclear research in Tehran did not contribute to construct confidence and probably go in the opposite direction."

After the talks in Moscow, the Russian foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, called on Iran to restore a moratorium on uranium enrichment. He added that the talks would continue but that it was "premature to speak of their results."

Moscow is determined on one hand to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, but eager on the other to avoid an American-led effort to impose sanctions or to use force against a country with which Russia has close diplomatic and economic ties.

In televised remarks before the talks, Mr. Lavrov told President Vladimir V. Putin and other members of his cabinet that Russia remained committed to finding a peaceful solution, but acknowledged that the issue was mired in "the current blind alley."

Iran's responses to the Russian proposal — which has been endorsed by the United States and Europe — have been contradictory. The top Iranian nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, responded positively in a visit here last month, but others, including Mr. Mottaki in his remarks on Monday, described it as inadequate.

Russian officials have shown signs of impatience, by delaying, for example, the completion of a nuclear power plant in Bushehr, Iran, that was expected to be finished already. They have not openly criticized Iran, however. Mr.

Lavrov urged Iran on Monday to take enough steps to satisfy the atomic energy agency before its general director, Mohamed ElBaradei, reports to the agency's governing board in two weeks.

In Brussels, Mr. Mottaki repeated Iran's position that its nuclear research was intended purely for energy fuel, not weapons.

"Nuclear weapons are not in Iran's defense doctrine," he said at a briefing with reporters. "We would like to enjoy our right to have nuclear technology for peaceful purposes."

In addition to Mr. Solana, Mr. Mottaki met with Benita Ferrero-Waldner, the union's foreign affairs commissioner.

"There remains a strong wish for a diplomatic solution," said Emma Udwin, a spokeswoman for Ms. Ferrero-Waldner. "We have no wish to isolate Iran; we hope Iran will not choose to isolate itself."

Graham Bowley contributed reporting from Brussels for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/21/international/middleeast/21iran.html?pagewanted=all>

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