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Long Island Newsday

March 10, 2006

Pg. 28

Iraq Seen Likely To Still Seek WMDs

By Timothy M. Phelps, Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON - A former top CIA official said yesterday that despite the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, Iraq is likely to be looking for weapons of mass destruction within the next five to 10 years.

Paul Pillar, who until last year was in charge of intelligence assessments for the Middle East, said the CIA warned the Bush administration before the Iraq invasion in 2003 that a change of regimes would not necessarily solve any WMD problem.

In a speech at the Middle East Institute here, Pillar said Iraqis live in "a dangerous neighborhood," with rival countries pursuing weapons of mass destruction. So the CIA had warned that a future Iraqi government would be likely to want the very weapons Hussein was (wrongly) suspected of hiding, including nuclear weapons, he said.

"Iraq may turn once again to ... a WMD program," Pillar, who is retired from the CIA, said yesterday. "And wouldn't that be ironic?"

Pillar recently published an article in Foreign Affairs magazine that for the first time fully laid out the CIA's side of the battle with the Bush administration over Iraq intelligence.

Pillar charges that the administration never sought strategic assessments from the CIA about Iraq. He said in his article that the Bush administration made its decision to go to war and then "cherry-picked" items from intelligence assessments in an effort to justify the decision to the public.

The biggest discrepancy between the CIA's intelligence and the administration's line on Iraq was the claim by Bush that there was a relationship between Hussein and al-Qaida, Pillar wrote. There was no intelligence supporting that theory, Pillar said, but the administration wanted to capitalize on "the country's militant post-9/11 mood," he wrote. Pillar wrote that the intelligence community, on its own initiative, warned the administration before the war that there was a significant chance of violent conflict in Iraq and that the war would probably boost radical Islam throughout the Middle East.

In his speech, Pillar said Iraq is serving the same purpose that Afghanistan once did, as an inspiration and a base for radical Islam.

<http://www.newsday.com/news/printedition/stories/ny-wowmd104656542mar10.0.679656.story>

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Washington Times

March 12, 2006

Pg. 1

Iran Raises Oil As Weapon In Nukes Standoff

By Nasser Karimi, Associated Press

TEHRAN -- Iran explicitly warned for the first time yesterday that it could use oil as a weapon if the U.N. Security Council imposes sanctions over an Iranian nuclear program that the U.S. and others suspect is trying to produce atomic bombs.

Later in the day, diplomats said Russia is pushing for a new round of international talks to be held away from U.N. headquarters, apparently hoping to head off a showdown in the council.

Iranian Interior Minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi raised the possibility of using Iran's oil and natural-gas supplies as a weapon in the international standoff and also noted Iran's strategic location at a choke point for a vital Persian Gulf oil route.

"If [they] politicize our nuclear case, we will use any means. We are rich in energy resources. We have control over the biggest and the most sensitive energy route of the world," Mr. Pourmohammadi was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

Iran is the No. 2 producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries after Saudi Arabia. It also lies on one side of the narrow Strait of Hormuz, a key passage for most of the crude oil shipped from the Persian Gulf nations.

Mr. Pourmohammadi's statements were the most specific yet in a series of threats issued by Iranian officials as the Security Council discusses how to cajole Iran into reimposing a freeze on uranium enrichment and fully cooperating with a U.N. probe of its suspect nuclear program.

Iran's government denies it is trying to develop atomic weapons, saying its program is intended only to produce fuel for nuclear reactors that generate electricity.

Russia, which has economic and political ties to Iran, has been trying to mediate a settlement and avoid U.N. sanctions.

In Vienna, Austria, a Western diplomat told the Associated Press that the Kremlin is trying to arrange talks March 20 among the five permanent Security Council members -- the United States, China, Russia, Britain and France -- and Germany.

The meeting is envisioned for Vienna because Russia wants to take the focus off the council's deliberations in New York, said the diplomat, who agreed to give details of the confidential discussions only on the condition of anonymity.

The five permanent council members considered proposals Friday on how to get Iran to answer questions about its nuclear program, abandon uranium enrichment and stop construction on a reactor.

The five planned another meeting tomorrow morning to look at a revised draft of a resolution involving Iran, the Western diplomat said.

Another diplomat who had seen the draft said it calls on Iran to halt construction of its heavy-water reactor and stop all uranium enrichment, but does not contain any threat of punishment against the Iranians.

The lack of a threat is a clear effort to get Russia and China on board. If that does not happen, U.S. Ambassador John R. Bolton and other senior U.S. officials have suggested Washington might try to rally its allies to impose their own targeted sanctions.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060312-011538-5725r.htm>

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London Sunday Times

March 12, 2006

Revealed: UK Develops Secret Nuclear Warhead

By Michael Smith

BRITAIN has been secretly designing a new nuclear warhead in conjunction with the Americans, provoking a legal row over the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The government has been pushing ahead with the programme while claiming that no decision has been made on a successor to Britain's Trident nuclear deterrent. Work on a new weapon by scientists at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston in Berkshire has been under way since Tony Blair was re-elected last May, and is now said to be ahead of similar US research.

The aim is to produce a simpler device using proven components to avoid breaching the ban on nuclear testing. Known as the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW), it is being designed so that it can be tested in a laboratory rather than by detonation.

"We've got to build something that we can never test and be absolutely confident that, when we use it, it will work," one senior British source said last week.

The secret programme to build a new warhead in close co-operation with the Americans will spark anger among Labour opponents of any replacement of the Trident programme, which is estimated to have cost nearly £10 billion. Developing a new weapon would also, according to expert advice from Cherie Booth's Matrix chambers, be a material breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The office of Lord Goldsmith, the attorney-general, refused to comment on whether it had been asked for legal advice by No 10.

Both Labour backbenchers and the Liberal Democrats accused the government of introducing a replacement nuclear weapon by the back door without a parliamentary debate.

Paul Flynn, a Labour backbencher who has drafted parliamentary motions questioning the need for a Trident replacement, insisted there had to be a proper debate. "The Trident missiles will last for another 20 years," he said. "Who on earth are we going to take on with them anyway? Replacing them wrecks any standing we have when we preach non-proliferation to countries like Iran."

Michael Moore, the Lib Dem foreign affairs spokesman, called for a statement. "This work would appear to pre-empt the proper debate the prime minister has promised," he said.

The controversy is set to ignite this week with an embarrassing report by the Foreign Policy Centre (FPC), set up under Blair's patronage, calling for Trident to be scrapped and not replaced.

On Tuesday the defence select committee will take evidence from experts, most of whom are expected to say that there is no need for a new nuclear deterrent.

The FPC report says that Britain's independent deterrent is an illusion. The missiles are stored in the United States and have to be collected by a British submarine before it goes on patrol.

Aldermaston is run by a consortium headed by Lockheed Martin, a US company, and there are 92 Americans working there, including the managing director and four of his senior managers.

"The UK should cease to try to keep up appearances and adopt a policy based on the reality that it is not an independent nuclear power," the FPC report concludes. "Trident should not be replaced and should be phased out now."

Blair is said to want to decide on Trident's replacement before he steps down. "It is a huge decision for the country and it will probably be done in a far more open way than the decisions have been taken before," he said last month.

As he spoke, work was well advanced at Aldermaston on designs for the RRW. The US Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore nuclear laboratories began a competition to produce an RRW last May. But Washington sources say the British have been designing their own Reliable Replacement Warhead and "are now ahead of the Americans".

One possible way to avoid breaching the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is for Blair to announce that the new deterrent will have fewer warheads. We currently have about 200.

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-2081800,00.html>

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London Sunday Telegraph
March 12, 2006

Iran Builds A Secret Underground Complex As Nuclear Tensions Rise

By Philip Sherwell, in Washington

Iran's leaders have built a secret underground emergency command centre in Teheran as they prepare for a confrontation with the West over their illicit nuclear programme, the Sunday Telegraph has been told.

The complex of rooms and offices beneath the Abbas Abad district in the north of the capital is designed to serve as a bolthole and headquarters for the country's rulers as military tensions mount.

The recently completed command centre is connected by tunnels to other government compounds near the Mossala prayer ground, one of the city's most important religious sites.

Offices of the state security forces, the energy department and the Organisation of Islamic Culture and Communications are all located in the same area.

The construction of the complex is part of the regime's plan to move more of its operations beneath ground. The Revolutionary Guard has overseen the development of subterranean chambers and tunnels - some more than half a mile long and an estimated 35ft high and wide - at sites across the country for research and development work on nuclear and rocket programmes.

The opposition National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) learnt about the complex from its contacts within the regime. The same network revealed in 2002 that Iran had been operating a secret nuclear programme for 18 years. The underground strategy is partly designed to hide activities from satellite view and international inspections but also reflects a growing belief in Teheran that its showdown with the international community could end in air strikes by America or Israel. "Iran's leaders are clearly preparing for a confrontation by going underground," said Alireza Jafarzadeh, the NCRI official who made the 2002 announcement.

America and Europe believe that Iran is secretly trying to acquire an atomic bomb, although the regime insists that its nuclear programme is for civilian energy purposes.

As the United Nations Security Council prepares to discuss Iran's nuclear operations this week, Teheran has been stepping up plans for confrontation. Its chief delegate on nuclear talks last week threatened that Iran would inflict "harm and pain" on America if censured by the Security Council.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the hardline president who has called for Israel to be "wiped off the map", also said that the West would "suffer" if it tried to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions. As the war of words intensified, President George W Bush said that Teheran represents a "grave national security concern" for America.

In Iraq, which Mr Ahmadinejad hopes will develop into a fellow Shia Islamic state, Iran is already using its proxy militia to attack British and American forces, often with Iranian-made bombs and weapons. As tensions grow, Teheran could order Hizbollah - the Lebanese-based terror faction that it created and arms - to attack targets in Israel.

The regime is also reviewing its contingency plans to attack tankers and American naval forces in the Persian Gulf and to mine the Strait of Hormuz, through which about 15 million barrels of oil (about 20 per cent of world production) passes each day. Any action in the Gulf would send oil prices soaring - a weapon that Iran has often threatened to wield.

The Pentagon's strategic planning is focused on the danger that Iran might try to mine the strait and deploy explosive-packed suicide boats against its warships. In May, American vessels in the Gulf will take part in the Arabian Gauntlet training exercise that deals with clearing mines from the strait, which has a navigable channel just two miles wide.

The naval wing of the Revolutionary Guard has in recent years practised "swarming" raids, using its flotilla of small rapid-attack boats to simulate assaults on commercial vessels and United States warships, according to Ken Timmerman, an American expert on Iran.

The Pentagon is particularly sensitive to the dangers of such attacks after al-Qaeda hit the USS Cole off the Yemen with a suicide boat in 2000, killing 17 American sailors. Last month the White House listed two foiled al-Qaeda plots to attack ships in the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

US intelligence believes that if Iranian nuclear facilities were attacked by either America or Israel, then Teheran would respond by trying to close the Strait of Hormuz with naval forces, mines and anti-ship cruise missiles.

"When these systems become fully operational, they will significantly enhance Iran's defensive capabilities and ability to deny access to the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz," Michael Maples, the director of the Defence Intelligence Agency testified before the Senate armed services committee last month.

A senior American intelligence officer said that the US navy would be able to reopen the strait but that it would be militarily costly. Hamid Reza Zakeri, a former Iranian intelligence officer, recently told Mr Timmerman that the Iranian navy's Strategic Studies Centre has produced an updated battle plan for the strait.

Its most devastating options would be to use its long-range Shahab-3 missiles to attack Israeli or American bases in the region or to deploy suicide bombers in Western cities under its strategy of "asymmetric" response.

"The price to the West for standing up to Iran is clear," Gen Moshe Ya'alon, the former Israeli defence chief said last month in Washington. "It includes terror attacks, economic hardship... and consequences resulting from fluctuations in Iranian oil production. Indeed, the regime believes that the West - including Israel - is afraid to deal with it."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/12/wiran12.xml>

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Washington Post

March 13, 2006

Pg. 1

U.S. Campaign Is Aimed At Iran's Leaders

Uneasy About Tehran's Nuclear Plans, Bush Administration Tries to Build Opposition to Theocracy

By Peter Baker and Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writers

As the dispute over its nuclear program arrives at the U.N. Security Council today, Iran has vaulted to the front of the U.S. national security agenda amid Bush administration plans for a sustained campaign against the ayatollahs of Tehran.

President Bush and his team have been huddling in closed-door meetings on Iran, summoning scholars for advice, investing in opposition activities, creating an Iran office in Washington and opening listening posts abroad dedicated to the efforts against Tehran.

The internal administration debate that raged in the first term between those who advocated more engagement with Iran and those who preferred more confrontation appears in the second term to be largely settled in favor of the latter. Although administration officials do not use the term "regime change" in public, that in effect is the goal they outline as they aim to build resistance to the theocracy.

"We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Senate testimony last week. "We do not have a problem with the Iranian people. We want the Iranian people to be free. Our problem is with the Iranian regime."

In private meetings, Bush and his advisers have been more explicit. Members of the Hoover Institution's board of overseers who met with Bush, Vice President Cheney and national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley two weeks ago emerged with the impression that the administration has shifted to a more robust policy aimed at the Iranian government.

"The message that we received is that they are in favor of separating the Iranian people from the regime," said Esmail Amid-Hozour, an Iranian American businessman who serves on the Hoover board.

"The upper hand is with those who are pushing regime change rather than those who are advocating more diplomacy," said Richard N. Haass, who as State Department policy planning director in Bush's first term was among those pushing for engagement.

But as the administration gears up, the struggle with Iran remains shadowed by Iraq. The botched intelligence on Saddam Hussein's weapons has left a credibility challenge in convincing the public and the world that the administration is right this time about Iran. After alienating European allies in the rush to war in Iraq, the administration is following a slower, multilateral approach. And with U.S. forces stretched, analysts wonder how feasible a military option would be if it came to that.

The focus on Iran inside the administration lately has been striking. Bush, according to aides, has been spending more time on the issue, and advisers have invited 30 to 40 specialists for consultations in recent months.

In the past week, the State Department created an Iran desk. Last year, only two people in the department worked full time on Iran; now there will be 10. The department is launching more training in the Farsi language and is planning an Iranian career track, which has been difficult without an embassy there.

Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns said in an interview that the department will also add staff in Dubai, which is part of the United Arab Emirates, as well as at other embassies in the vicinity of Iran, all assigned to watch Tehran. He called the new Dubai outpost the "21st century equivalent" of the Riga station in Latvia that monitored the Soviet Union in the 1930s when the United States had no embassy in Moscow.

The administration also has launched a \$75 million program to advance democracy in Iran by expanding broadcasting into the country, funding nongovernmental organizations and promoting cultural exchanges. Voice of America broadcasts one hour a day into Iran; by April, that will grow to four hours a day, and the administration

plans to go to 24 hours a day. But the administration suffered a setback last week when lawmakers slashed \$19 million, mainly from broadcast operations.

The administration got to this point after a year of deliberately staying on the sidelines. After the United States took the lead on Iraq, the British told Bush administration officials that Washington should let the Europeans go first on dealing with Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

During her first trip to Europe as secretary of state, in February 2005, Rice was surprised that most questions from European officials concerned Iran, not Iraq, and was sobered by the realization that they viewed Washington as the problem, not Tehran.

When Bush went to Europe a few weeks later, French President Jacques Chirac and then-Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany pushed him to support a British-French-German diplomatic effort dubbed the EU-3. Bush agreed, and Rice announced the decision a year ago last weekend. With the Europeans in the lead, it became easier to persuade Russia and China as well to take a tougher line with Iran.

"We have taken the position from the get-go that we believed it was important to work with as many countries as possible," Burns said. "We wanted to have the entire international community on our side in order to pressure Iran." The biggest help bringing the international community together, though, came from Iran. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad proved so incendiary -- in dismissing the Holocaust and talking about wiping Israel off the map -- that the prospect of a negotiated solution faded. The statements underscored the danger posed by Tehran and, according to Burns, led Rice "to say we need to fire on all pistons on Iran." Ultimately, the Europeans, Russia and China agreed to send Iran to the Security Council.

Bush decided to push more overtly for a democratic Iran. "Tonight," he said in his State of the Union address on Jan. 31, "let me speak directly to the citizens of Iran: America respects you, and we respect your country. We respect your right to choose your own future and win your own freedom. And our nation hopes one day to be the closest of friends with a free and democratic Iran."

Now that the nuclear issue is at the Security Council, the U.S. strategy is to escalate gradually rather than force an immediate climax. The first step would be a statement by the council president declaring Iran in violation of nuclear treaty obligations and demanding it suspend uranium enrichment. If that fails, the council could be asked to impose economic sanctions or pass a resolution allowing military force to enforce compliance. Russia and China, which have veto power, seem unlikely to support either move.

"There's a clear desire to have a broad coalition," a senior U.S. official said. "The question is, how do you get any action out of it?"

Some analysts believe this year will lead to a decision point for Bush whether to use a military option. For now, Bush and his aides say all options are on the table, but as a practical matter no armed strike is likely until diplomacy has been exhausted.

Many military specialists doubt a strike would be effective because Iran's nuclear facilities are scattered in dozens of locations, and would require hundreds of sorties first to disrupt Iranian air defenses. Such an attack, they say, could inflame the Muslim world and alienate reformers within Iran.

Haass, now president of the Council on Foreign Relations, said Washington should instead try direct negotiations with Tehran: "The United States ought to make a major diplomatic push in part because it might succeed, in part because none of the other options are attractive and in part because if you're going to escalate you want to demonstrate that you tried." The current policy, he said, "looks to me more like a hope than a strategy."

Some Republicans, though, say a military attack may be required if only to set back Iran's nuclear program a few years.

"Every year that we wait, the risk increases," said former House speaker Newt Gingrich, a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board. "I would hope that the administration would decide to do something decisive. . . . We have the military power in the region if we need it. It's a question of whether we have the will."

Such a decision could prompt deep skepticism after the Iraq intelligence failure. "As far as Congress, they're certainly going to do their homework more this time and demand more from the intelligence community before they go along with this," said a Senate Republican leadership aide who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The way things are going now, the aide said, "It's hard to see this getting resolved under the Bush administration."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/12/AR2006031201016.html?sub=AR>

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Washington Times

March 13, 2006

Pg. 1

Iranian Pact With Venezuela Stokes Fears Of Uranium Sales

By Kelly Hearn, The Washington Times

BUENOS AIRES -- A recent deal between Iran and Venezuela provides for the exploitation of Venezuela's strategic minerals, prompting opposition figures to warn that President Hugo Chavez's government could be planning to provide Tehran with uranium for its nuclear program.

The deal was part of a package of agreements, most of which were announced during a visit last month to Caracas and Cuba by Iranian parliament Speaker Gholam Ali Haddad-Adel. The two countries also established a joint \$200 million development fund and signed bilateral deals to build homes and factories, and exploit petroleum.

Public details are vague, but Venezuelan opposition figures and press reports have said the deal on minerals could involve the production and transfer to Iran have said the deal on minerals could involve the production and transfer to Iran of Venezuelan uranium taken from known deposits located in the dense jungle states of Amazonas and Bolivar.

Mr. Chavez last week ridiculed such speculation as being part of an "imperialist plan" propagated by international news media.

"Now they say I am sending uranium to make atomic bombs from here, from the Venezuelan Amazon to send directly to the Persian Gulf," Mr. Chavez said during a meeting at a military club on Tuesday. "This shows they have no limit in their capacity to invent lies."

The speculation comes at a time of rising tension between the world community and Iran, which yesterday declared it had ruled out a proposed compromise under which it would process uranium for a peaceful nuclear program in Russia.

The five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France -- are to meet this week to discuss a draft statement aimed at increasing the pressure on Iran to abandon its nuclear plans.

Retired Venezuelan Vice Adm. Jose Rafael Huizi-Clavier said the mining arrangements negotiated last month with Iran are broad and unspecific and could easily include uranium.

Other critics of Mr. Chavez point out that Venezuela recently voted against reporting Tehran to the U.N. Security Council for its uranium-enrichment program and that Mr. Chavez in recent months has attempted to purchase his own civilian-use nuclear technology from Argentina. Adm. Huizi-Clavier, who heads the Venezuela-based Institutional Military Front, a group of ex-military officials opposed to Mr. Chavez, said his group is "alarmed by a confluence of facts." He cited construction work at a small military base and the widening of a military airstrip near the Brazilian border, where uranium deposits are said to exist.

He also noted that Mr. Chavez expelled U.S. missionaries from areas known to have uranium in February. At the time, Mr. Chavez accused New Tribes Mission, a Florida-based group, of working for the CIA and foreign mining interests.

A Florida-based spokesman for the group said none of the missionaries knew anything about uranium-mining activities.

Venezuelan Minister of Science and Technology Yadira Cordova said on Thursday that the airfield belonged to the New Tribes Mission. She also denied uranium was being mined or processed in the area, saying such technologically demanding processes "would be detected easily."

In Washington, a State Department official said, "We are aware of reports of possible Iranian exploitation of Venezuelan uranium, but we see no commercial uranium activities in Venezuela."

Adm. Huizi-Clavier said Mr. Chavez was playing a "dangerous game" by backing Iran at the United Nations in defiance of overwhelming world opinion.

Former Venezuelan Defense Minister Raul Salazar said the country's support of Iran's nuclear program was pushing relations with Washington past "the point of no return."

Mr. Chavez's support for Iran's nuclear plan has thus far been purely political, he said, but "that is not to say [uranium transfers to Tehran] couldn't happen in the future."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060313-121547-4071r.htm>

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Washington Times

March 13, 2006

Pg. 1

Tapes Reveal WMD Plans By Saddam

Intent to rebuild arsenal after inspections evident

By Rowan Scarborough, The Washington Times

Audiotapes of Saddam Hussein and his aides underscore the Bush administration's argument that Baghdad was determined to rebuild its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction once the international community had tired of inspections and left the Iraqi dictator alone.

In addition to the captured tapes, U.S. officials are analyzing thousands of pages of newly translated Iraqi documents that tell of Saddam seeking uranium from Africa in the mid-1990s.

The documents also speak of burying prohibited missiles, according to a government official familiar with the declassification process.

But it is not clear whether Baghdad did what the documents indicate, said the U.S. official, who asked not to be named.

"The factories are present," an Iraqi aide tells Saddam on one of the tapes, made by the dictator in the mid-1990s while U.N. weapons inspectors were searching for Baghdad's remaining stocks of weapons of mass destruction.

"The factories remain, in the mind they remain. Our spirit is with us, based solely on the time period," the aide says, according to the documents. "And [inspectors] take note of the time period, they can't account for our will."

The quote is from roughly 12 hours of taped conversations that unexpectedly landed in the lap of Bill Tierney, a former Army warrant officer and Arabic speaker who was translating for the FBI tapes unearthed in Iraq after the invasion.

Mr. Tierney made a copy, which he provided to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. The committee in turn gave a copy to intelligence analysts who authenticated the voice as that of Saddam.

Mr. Tierney said that the quote from the Saddam aide, and scores of others, show Saddam was rebuilding his once-ample weapons stocks.

"The tapes show that Saddam rebuilt his program and successfully prevented the U.N. from finding out about it," he said.

There also exists a quote from the dictator himself, who ordered the tapings to keep a record of his inner-sanctum discussions, that Mr. Tierney thinks shows Saddam planned to use a proxy to attack the United States.

"Terrorism is coming ... with the Americans," Saddam said. "With the Americans, two years ago, not a long while ago, with the English I believe, there was a campaign ... with one of them, that in the future there would be terrorism with weapons of mass destruction."

The tapes are spurring a new debate over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction stocks more than a year after the CIA's Iraq Survey Group (ISG) completed a lengthy postwar inspection. It concluded that Iraq did not possess stocks of weapons of mass destruction when the U.S.-led coalition invaded in March 2003.

There is more to come. House intelligence committee Chairman Rep. Peter Hoekstra, Michigan Republican, told The Washington Times that about 500 hours of additional Saddam tapings are still being translated and analyzed by the U.S. In addition, in Qatar, U.S. Central Command's forward headquarters in the Persian Gulf, sit 48,000 boxes of Iraqi documents, of which the military has delivered 68 pages to the committee.

"I don't want to overstate what is in the documents," Mr. Hoekstra said. "I certainly want to get them out because I think people are going to find them very interesting."

He said the office of John D. Negroponte, the director of national intelligence, is now weighing the congressman's request to release 40 of the 68 pages.

Of the tapes released so far, Mr. Hoekstra said, "Everything [Saddam] is doing is saying, 'Let's take it and hide it' with a clear intent. 'As soon as this is over, we're going to be back after this.'"

So far, the tapes do not shed light on what ultimately happened to Saddam's large stocks of weapons of mass destruction. None were found by the ISG, whose director, Charles Duelfer, filed a final report in 2004.

Some pundits and recently retired military officers are convinced that Saddam moved his remaining weapons to Syria. They cite satellite photos of lines of trucks heading into the neighboring country before the invasion and the fact Saddam positioned his trusted Iraqi Intelligence Service agents at border crossings.

Mr. Duelfer said there were promising leads that weapons of mass destruction did go into Syria, but the security situation prevented him from closing the loop. Mr. Duelfer concluded that Saddam planned to resume weapons of mass destruction production once the United Nations lifted economic sanctions.

Mr. Tierney said he thinks the regime poured chemical weapons into lakes and rivers and sent other stocks over the border to Syria. Mr. Tierney served as a U.N. weapons inspector in the 1990s.

"The ISG, they were lied to in a very systematic way," he said. "Lying. They were very good at it."

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060313-123146-7380r.htm>

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Iran Rejects Russian Offer To Defuse Nuclear Dispute

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, March 12 — Iran said Sunday that it had rejected a Russian proposal for a compromise on Iran's intention to enrich uranium. Iran also made a vague threat that it might drop out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty over the decision by the United Nations' nuclear monitoring body to forward its case to the Security Council. The comments were Iran's first official reaction since last week, when it became clear that the International Atomic Energy Agency would send Iran's case to the Security Council.

"We had told the Russians that we will not give up our research and development program and the proposal is ruled out if this part of our plan is ignored," Hamidreza Assefi, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency, referring to the small-scale uranium enrichment Iran resumed last month.

Russia had offered to enrich uranium for Iran for use for energy purposes if Iran would refrain from doing so. It made a last-minute face-saving offer to allow Iran to continue some enrichment eventually for research purposes but withdrew the offer under Western pressure.

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki warned Sunday on the sideline of conference on energy and security that Iran might drop out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

"If we reach a point where the existing mechanisms do not provide for the right of the Iranian people, then the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran would be possibly revised and reconsidered," he said in response to a question about whether Iran would withdraw from the treaty.

Mr. Assefi said, however, that withdrawing from the treaty "was not on Iran's agenda yet."

The United States and Europe, which contend that Iran is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, last week said they were opposed to a possible compromise on the Russian deal that would allow Iran to maintain its experimental research program. Iran says that its nuclear program is completely for peaceful purposes.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking on her plane returning from Santiago, Chile, said Sunday that she was not surprised at Iran's comments.

"I think the Iranians have said a number of times that they were interested, they were interested, but they really never demonstrated that they were interested in the Russian proposal as the Russians had actually put it forward," she said. "So I don't think it's very surprising."

Ms. Rice rebuffed a suggestion from Russia that there should be further discussions among leading members of the Security Council in Vienna to avert a confrontation with Iran. "I think the discussions are now in New York," Ms. Rice said, adding that it had always been the understanding of Russia, Europe, China and others that once the International Atomic Energy Agency referred Iran's case to the Security Council for possible punitive action, discussions should begin there in early March.

The United States is seeking a so-called presidential statement at the Council calling on Iran to resume its suspension of uranium-enrichment activities. Such a statement would not require a vote but would be adopted by consensus.

Iran has argued that the nonproliferation treaty gives the country the right to conduct nuclear research.

Mr. Mottaki also said Sunday that Iran was not planning to use oil as a weapon in its confrontation with the West, contradicting comments made a day earlier by the interior minister, Mostafa Pourmohammadi. He said Iran "will not use oil as a foreign policy instrument."

A Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mikhail Kamyinin, said Sunday that Russia was studying Iran's comments rejecting its proposal, "after which adjustments will be made," Agence France-Presse reported, quoting the RIA Novosti state news agency.

He added, "Russia continues to call for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to Iran's nuclear program."

Steven R. Weisman contributed reporting from Rio de Janeiro for this article.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/13/international/middleeast/13iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Washington Times

March 14, 2006

Pg. 1

Tehran Elite Turning On Extremist Presidency

By John R. Bradley, The Washington Times

TEHRAN -- Iran's clerical and business establishments, deeply concerned by what they see as reckless spending and needlessly aggressive foreign policies, are increasingly turning against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Within this context, many see the president's long-running confrontation with the United States and Europe over Tehran's nuclear program as an attempt to demonize the West and distract the Iranian public from pressing domestic problems.

A relatively small group of extremists "at the top of the government around the president" are seeking to benefit from a crisis with the West, because "that way they will be able once again to blame the West for all of their problems," said Mousa Ghaninejad, the editor of Iran's best-selling economics daily newspaper, Dunya Al-Eqtisad. Millions of low-income Iranians voted for the new president last year, motivated by his firm stand against corruption and pledges to give financial priority to their needs.

"His appeal was to those for whom class discrimination is important, and his simple lifestyle gave an air of credibility to his claims," said Nasser Hadian, a political analyst at Tehran University who attended high school with Mr. Ahmadinejad.

Mr. Hadian predicted that senior Iranian clerics would continue to support Mr. Ahmadinejad -- or at least not move against him -- for about a year because of that popular support. But privately, he said, they feel he is isolating Iran internationally and putting its economy at risk.

Also at the back of their minds is the fear that his anti-corruption drive ultimately threatens their own considerable privileges.

Mr. Ghaninejad was one of 13 experts in economics who warned, in two petitions to the government just before Mr. Ahmadinejad was elected, that his populist, short-term policies would spell disaster for Iran in the long term.

"Now he's throwing money at complex problems and just doesn't care about the long term. He thinks he should help the poor today and leave everything else to the Hidden Imam," the newspaper editor said, referring to a character whom Shi'ites believe will one day emerge to bring justice to the world.

The critics say Mr. Ahmadinejad's budget, which has just been approved by parliament after prolonged wrangling, flouts economic doctrines sanctioned by the powerful Expediency Council, which is under the supervision of the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran's long-term planning calls for vigorous efforts to reduce the size of government and to curb subsidies to state-owned entities, which account for an estimated 75 percent of the economy. But the Ahmadinejad budget boosts spending by 25 percent and envisions a 31 percent increase in spending on state enterprises.

The 2006 budget also calls on the government to use up to \$40 billion of its foreign cash reserves -- generated from oil sales -- to meet the fiscal year's spending needs, in spite of long-term plans calling for restraint.

The value of Tehran's stock market had fallen by \$10 billion under Mr. Ahmadinejad as of February, the Los Angeles Times reported. Other recent Western news reports say that the nation's vibrant real-estate market has withered and that capital outflows are increasing.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's spending has pushed the inflation rate to an estimated 13.5 percent, and several estimates say it could go as high as 30 percent this year.

Economic analysts note that inflation will be felt most acutely by the poor, undermining the president's support among his most important constituency.

Parliament has challenged the president on other issues, most notably by rejecting three successive candidates for oil minister. Mr. Ahmadinejad declared angrily after the second rejection that "no other president has ever been subject to such negative propaganda and treatment."

Mr. Ahmadinejad's detractors say the broad coalition against him is attracting many of the regime's powerful personalities and may include even the supreme leader himself, despite his superficial statements in support of the president.

They point to a recent decree by Ayatollah Khamenei giving the Expediency Council, headed by former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, oversight of the presidency.

The clerical establishment has close ties with the capitalist class and is said to be appalled at the rapid slide of the economy since Mr. Ahmadinejad's inauguration. The clerics are also thought to be deeply apprehensive about the president's aggressive foreign policy.

Mr. Ghaninejad said that by confronting Iran over its nuclear program, the West was in fact throwing a lifeline to Mr. Ahmadinejad.

"If they keep piling on the pressure, Ahmadinejad will become a national hero," the newspaper editor said.

"Let the Iranians deal with him. If you leave him alone, he will become a bankrupt politician within a year. With greater pressure, only the extremists will benefit."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060314-125702-7713r.htm>

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U.S. Said To Misread Hussein On Arms

Report Cites Suspicions of Ruse

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

U.S. intelligence agencies misinterpreted Saddam Hussein's directions that his military do away with weapons of mass destruction or their elements, believing incorrectly the orders were a ruse meant to hide evidence of such weapons from United Nations inspectors, according to an article in Foreign Affairs magazine that includes excerpts of a recently declassified report by the Pentagon's Joint Forces Command.

In 2002, when U.S. intelligence intercepted an internal message between two Iraqi commanders talking about removing the words "nerve agents" from "wireless instructions," the analysts "had no way of knowing that this time the information reflected the regime's attempt to ensure it was in compliance with U.N. resolutions," according to the Pentagon report.

The same situation existed when U.S. intelligence learned of instructions to the Iraqi military to search "for any chemical agents" in order to "make sure the area is free of chemical containers, and write a report on it," the article says. The United States "viewed this information through the prism of a decade of prior deceit" and did not believe it.

The Foreign Affairs article was written by three defense analysts who helped draft the Pentagon report: Kevin Woods, an analyst in Washington; James Lacey, a military analyst for the U.S. Joint Forces Command; and Williamson Murray, a history professor at the U.S. Naval Academy.

The intelligence analyses became part of then-Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's Feb. 5, 2003, briefing of the U.N. Security Council, in which the United States attempted to justify military action against Iraq based on Hussein's failure to disclose his weapons of mass destruction. Piece by piece, the intelligence presented that day by Powell has been shown to have been wrong, and the newly released Joint Forces Command report of lessons learned from the Iraq war, completed in late 2003, adds to that embarrassing record.

Ali Hassan al-Majeed, now on trial with Hussein in Baghdad for his use of chemical bombs against Kurds, told U.S. interrogators that at some point before the U.S.-led invasion Hussein told his Revolutionary Command Council that Iraq did not have prohibited weapons of mass destruction, but Hussein refused to tell the world that. He "flatly rejected a suggestion that the regime remove all doubts to the contrary, going on to explain that such a declaration might encourage the Israelis to attack," according to the report.

The Foreign Affairs article, originally scheduled to be published in May, was released at the same time the New York Times on Sunday and Monday published excerpts of a book written jointly by its military reporter, Michael Gordon, and retired Marine Lt. Gen. Bernard Trainor, which was published this week and is based partly on the Joint Forces Command report.

Joint Forces Command personnel interviewed more than 100 Iraqi military officers and officials, and read through captured documents. Their book-length classified report focused primarily on the military details of the invasion and the rush to take Baghdad, as seen from both the U.S. and Iraqi sides.

David Kay, the first head of the Iraqi Survey Group that searched for Iraq's unconventional weapons after the March 2003 invasion, said yesterday he had read parts of the classified report in late 2003 and thought it was quite good.

A 1996 memo from the Iraqi Intelligence Service directing subordinates to "insure" there were not items related to prohibited weapons at their sites was the result of the earlier defection of Hussein's two sons-in-law, who told U.N. inspectors and U.S. intelligence personnel that chemical, biological and nuclear weapons had all been destroyed. "Some stuff was still around because the sons-in-law, before defecting, had not carried out earlier instructions to destroy everything," Kay said.

By late 2002, with U.N. inspectors back in Iraq and the United States building up its invasion force, Hussein decided to try to convince the world that he had in fact given up his prohibited weapons programs.

Hussein "was insistent that Iraq would give full access to U.N. inspectors 'in order not to give President Bush any excuses to start a war,' " said the article, quoting the Pentagon report. "But after years of purposeful obfuscation, it was difficult to convince anyone that Iraq was not once again being economical with the truth," it concluded.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060314-010558-5660r.htm>

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Showdown At U.N.? Iran Seems Calm

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS, March 13 — After trying for years to prevent having its nuclear program judged in the United Nations Security Council, Iran has shifted course and decided to confront the Council head on.

Iran is gambling that the 15 members, who plan to take up the Iranian dossier this week for the first time, will be too divided to inflict meaningful punishment.

Sanctions against Iran, the second largest oil producer in OPEC, could further destabilize the oil markets. Military force, at least for the moment, is unlikely, with American troops stretched thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.

So Iran's leaders have stopped trying to woo the world and now say they want the process to take its course.

"Let the Security Council review the dossier directly," President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told reporters in January, defending the reopening of the uranium enrichment facility in Natanz for what Iran describes as research. "Since we have a clear logic and we act according to the law, we are not worried."

In Tehran on Monday, Mr. Ahmadinejad portrayed Iran's position not as obstinate or rigid but as a reflection of strength. "We know well that a country's backing down one iota on its undeniable rights is the same as losing everything," state television quoted him as saying. "We will not bend to a few countries' threats, as their demands for giving up our nation's rights are unfair and cruel."

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader and the country's ultimate authority, who once stood before the United Nations and branded it "a paper factory for issuing worthless and ineffective orders," has also endorsed the strategy. In remarks to leading clerics on Thursday, he vowed to "resist any pressure and threat," adding, "If Iran quits now, the case will not be over."

Iran has never had much use for the Security Council.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, the Council at first did not even call for a cease-fire or the withdrawal of the Iraqi troops to the border.

When Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranian soldiers later in the decade — the first verified use of chemical weapons since World War I — the Council refused to impose sanctions.

Iran had only itself to blame, the Council seemed to say. The country was seen as a renegade state that could not be trusted. It violated international law when it seized the American Embassy in 1979 and held diplomats hostage. It continued the war against Iraq for years after Mr. Hussein brought his soldiers home.

But beginning in 2003, a few months after Iran's clandestine nuclear sites were uncovered, Tehran began to take whatever small conciliatory measures were necessary to keep its nuclear program off the Security Council's agenda. Avoiding action in that forum was at the heart of Iran's decision to open negotiations with France, Britain and Germany in 2003 and to allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency access to its nuclear sites, according to Hassan Rowhani, who was replaced as Iran's chief nuclear negotiator after Mr. Ahmadinejad took office last year.

"At that time, the United States was at the height of its arrogance, and our country was not yet ready to go to the U.N. Security Council," Mr. Rowhani said at a closed-door session of Iran's ideological policy makers in September, as he was leaving his post.

Consideration of Iran's case by the Council would give the United States more power over Iran's fate, reduce the influence of the Europeans and expose Iran's missile program to new scrutiny, Mr. Rowhani said.

"The most important promise" the Europeans gave Iran, he said, "was that they would stand firm against attempts to take this case to the U.N. Security Council."

The speech was published late last year in a Persian-language journal, Rahbord.

Iran's nuclear strategy had been based on keeping the program secret, Mr. Rowhani said, and once that secrecy was shattered, the country became vulnerable to pressure. Iran, he said, had "no choice" except to enter into negotiations with the Europeans and to open its nuclear facilities to inspectors.

Under a November 2004 agreement with the Europeans, Iran pledged to freeze enrichment-related activities as long as the two sides were negotiating a long-term package of incentives for the country.

But in a remarkable admission, Mr. Rowhani suggested in his speech that Iran had used the negotiations with the Europeans to dupe them. He boasted that while negotiations were continuing, Iran managed to master a key stage in the nuclear fuel process — the conversion of uranium yellowcake at its Isfahan plant.

"While we were talking with the Europeans in Tehran, we were installing equipment in parts of the facility in Isfahan, but we still had a long way to go to complete the project," he said. "In fact, by creating a calm environment, we were able to complete the work on Isfahan."

As a result of the negotiations with Europe, he added, "We are in fact much more prepared to go to the U.N. Security Council."

The view that Iran is ready to take on the Council is not wholeheartedly embraced inside Iran. While Iran's decision to continue its uranium enrichment activities is universally defended, some public figures have criticized the confrontational tone.

Simply being investigated by the Council is enough to erode international confidence in Iran, some analysts say, with damaging repercussions.

"Even if political measures are not taken against us, the country's political prestige will be jeopardized," Ahmad Shirzad, a reformist politician and former legislator, said last month. "There will also be major effects in the economy. Investors will move their capital to safe places and there will be a brain drain."

Particularly striking has been criticism by Mohammad Khatami, the former president. "There will be bad consequences if our case is sent to the Security Council," he predicted last month. "It will not only affect our economy. Our right to nuclear energy might also be affected."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/14/international/middleeast/14iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Los Angeles Times

March 14, 2006

Pg. 1

Iran May Finally Be Ready To Talk

As Tehran shifts toward engagement, however, the U.S. appears to be moving away.

By John Daniszewski and Alissa J. Rubin, Times Staff Writers

TEHRAN — In spite of the hostile rhetoric in recent days over Iran's nuclear ambitions, the Islamic Republic may be losing its long-standing reluctance to speak directly with the United States, politicians and analysts here say.

There is a growing body of opinion in Iran that talks with Washington on the nuclear question and regional security issues could be in the country's interest. For the first time, reformers and conservatives appear to be in agreement on that question.

But as Tehran has shifted toward engagement with Washington, the U.S. has appeared to be moving in the opposite direction.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has said that channels exist for limited talks with Iran, mentioning the U.S. envoys to Iraq and Afghanistan, and Iran's mission to the United Nations in New York.

"I think that that is the appropriate level of engagement given our deep concerns about Iranian policy on the nuclear issue, on the terrorism issue and indeed in terms of the Iranian regime's treatment of its own people," she said.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John R. Bolton said Monday, "I don't think we have anything to say to the Iranians."

For almost three decades, Iran shunned contacts with the country labeled here as the Great Satan.

The late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a *fatwa*, or religious ruling, against relations with the United States during the early days of the Iranian revolution. The country's conservative religious establishment stuck to that line. Now, that refusal to talk is softening.

Mehdi Karroubi, the former parliament speaker and a close associate of Khomeini, said in an interview that the *fatwa* was not meant to last forever.

"The break in relations is not forever and not for eternity," said the bearded, white-turbaned mullah, noting that he was expressing his personal opinion. Sipping tea in an elegant reception room in a house near one of the shah's former palaces, he added, "We only need a pioneer, someone to take the first step."

One factor pushing the change is the perception in Iran that the country would be coming to talks in a position of relative strength.

Iran's growing influence in the region, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the U.S. could benefit from Iranian cooperation, allows it to engage the United States on a more equal footing, said Amir Mohebian, political editor of Resalat, a hard-line conservative newspaper.

Under former President Mohammad Khatami, Iran could only move one step forward, two steps back, he said.

Under new President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranians will move two steps forward, one back, he predicted.

The rapprochement would not necessarily be from "love or emotion, but out of biological necessity," said Nasser Hadian, professor of international law at Tehran University.

In an interview with Time magazine last month, Ali Larijani, the country's supreme national security secretary, said that from Iran's perspective, talks with the United States could be useful.

"We have no problems in negotiating on nuclear issues, and also issues of interest to Muslims, things that will bring calm to the region, provided that they are honest and that Mr. Bush does not harangue us," said Larijani, a conservative politician who opposed Ahmadinejad in the first round of last year's presidential election.

From the late 1990s until 2002, U.S. policy was to try to engage the Iranian government and coax it gradually to democracy. Beginning with President Bush's "axis of evil" speech in 2002, the U.S. reverted to a policy of containment of Iran.

More recently, the administration appears to have endorsed bringing about the overthrow of the government as its goal, seeking \$85 million from Congress for that purpose. The tougher stance is supported by many Iranian exiles in the United States, who see the government as irredeemable.

The election of Ahmadinejad, an ultra-religious, unapologetic hard-liner — and his comments last year questioning the Holocaust and saying that Israel should be wiped from the map — gave ammunition to those in the West and in Israel who argue that Iran must be confronted, not negotiated with.

But advocates of talks note that in Iran, Ahmadinejad is not the only power determining policy. Nor is he in charge of Iran's external affairs, which fall mainly under the purview of the Supreme National Security Council and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the country's supreme leader.

Supporters of former President Hashemi Rafsanjani — still a potent figure as head of the Expediency Council, which coordinates among the different branches of the state — are among those arguing that dialogue would be a better course for Iran than confrontation.

"We are in favor of a dialogue. Before, the fundamentalists would not have approved, but now they [also] think it would be the thing to do," said Mohammed Atrianfar, editor of the moderate Shargh newspaper, who is close to Rafsanjani.

Hadian believes the elements exist for a compromise between Iran and the United States. There is no consensus among the Iranian elite to weaponize the country's nuclear technology, as Western officials suspect, he says. He asserts that the government has agreed only to seek nuclear knowledge and a limited capability to build weapons as a bargaining chip and a deterrent if it is threatened.

Most of the government believes that having such weapons would actually increase Iran's vulnerability, he said. A nuclear arms race in the Middle East could eliminate Iran's conventional military superiority and drive Arab neighbors further into the arms of America, he said.

The nuclear issue would not be the most important item to be resolved in talks with the United States, Hadian added. For the Americans, he said, the key issues are cooperation on Iraq and curtailment of Iran's support of groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. The Iranians would like security guarantees and a push for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, he said.

Strategically, he said, the United States and Iran share many aims, including stability in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as free movement of oil through the Persian Gulf.

"Both sides have demands," he said. "For a fundamental resolution of the problem, the U.S. should engage, and other issues should be on the table."

The two nations "need one another. They just cannot ignore one another," he said.

As a matter of pride, many Iranians would like to be taken seriously enough by the United States to be engaged directly.

Moreover, diplomats said that what Iran wants most, only the U.S. can give: security guarantees and access to technology and foreign investment.

With U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan and with Israel clearly hostile, Iran is worried about attack, those diplomats say.

"The U.S. keeps talking about regime change in Iran, and that makes them nervous. Only the U.S. can make a security guarantee," said a diplomat close to the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA, the U.N. nuclear watchdog in Vienna. And even the threat of sanctions has chilled the Iranian economy.

How talks might take place remains unknown. One option discussed by third-country diplomats would be something akin to the six-party talks underway with North Korea in which the U.S. has joined South Korea, Japan, China and Russia.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei V. Lavrov mentioned that model Friday. Lavrov proposed a group that would include Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the IAEA. Others have talked about Britain, France and Germany as well as Russia, China, the U.S., Iran, and perhaps South Africa, a nonaligned country that gave up its nuclear program.

"Then the U.S. can say it's multilateral, but when they are all in the room, there will be an opportunity to talk," one diplomat said.

Whatever device is used to open talks, "the question is not about the past. It is how to shape the future," said Mahmood Vaezi, Iran's former deputy foreign minister and now a government advisor. "Both sides now are waiting for the other side to change his view. Both sides should revise their positions together."

Daniszewski reported from Tehran and Rubin from Vienna. Times staff writers Paul Richter in Washington and Maggie Farley at the United Nations also contributed to this report.

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Washington Post

March 14, 2006

Pg. 16

No Support From China Or Russia On Iran Measure

U.S. and Allies May Put Resolution to a U.N. Vote

By Colum Lynch, Washington Post Staff Writer

UNITED NATIONS, March 13 -- The United States, France and Britain failed on Monday to get support from China and Russia on a proposed statement pressuring Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment efforts, diplomats said, and they considered putting a resolution to a vote anyway within the 15-member U.N. Security Council.

The day's events reflected the frustration of the United States and its European allies that a week of closed-door negotiations in New York with China and Russia have failed to yield an agreement. A push for a vote without such an agreement carries the risk of creating a rift among the council's most powerful members.

U.S. and European diplomats hope they can increase diplomatic pressure on Moscow and Beijing by involving other council members in the negotiations, said European diplomats.

France and Britain, the chief sponsors of the proposed statement, scheduled a meeting of all council members for Tuesday afternoon at France's mission to the United Nations, said a Security Council diplomat. They will present elements of a proposed council statement that would call on Iran to suspend its enrichment of uranium and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

John R. Bolton, the U.S. ambassador, said he and his European counterparts will continue to press Russia and China to endorse the text Tuesday morning at a meeting of the council's five permanent members. "We're trying to hold the perm five together, but reality is reality and time is an important factor given the Iranians continue to progress towards overcoming their technological difficulties" in developing a nuclear weapon, Bolton said.

Iran's rejection Sunday of a Russian offer to resolve the crisis by agreeing to enrich Iranian uranium on Russian soil has strained relations between the two countries. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday that Iran wants to resume negotiations in Moscow, but he expressed frustration with Tehran's tactics. "We are extremely disappointed with the way Iran is behaving in the course of these talks," Lavrov said at a news briefing. "Iran is absolutely no help to those who want to find peaceful ways to solve this problem."

The Russian proposal, which is backed by the United States, the European Union and China, has been the subject of fruitless negotiations between the two sides for weeks. "Frankly, I cannot comment on any Iranian refusal because of contradictory signals from Tehran -- one moment they refuse, the next they do not," Lavrov said.

Russia and China have publicly and privately urged Iran to suspend its enrichment of uranium and to cooperate with the U.N. atomic energy agency. But they have vigorously opposed any initiatives in the Security Council that could potentially lead to the imposition of sanctions or to the use of force.

A key sticking point involves a provision in the proposed U.N. statement that would ask the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, to report to the council within 14 days on Iran's compliance. Russia and China, who both favor having the IAEA manage the Iranian nuclear crisis, have proposed that ElBaradei's findings be reported to the IAEA board, not to the Security Council.

But the United States and the Europeans insist that the issue be handled by the Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions and to authorize military action. "I think we want a constructive statement," China's ambassador, Wang Guangya, told the Associated Press. "I think they want to be too tough."

Correspondent Peter Finn in Moscow contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/13/AR2006031301798.html>

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Philadelphia Inquirer

March 14, 2006

A Misguided Missile Proposal

By Steve Andreasen

"Given the possibility that intelligence about a fleeting target is wrong, erring with a conventional weapon is preferable to erring with a nuclear weapon, the strategic commander suggests."

--Inside the Pentagon newsletter, Feb. 23

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the rationale for keeping thousands of nuclear weapons atop long-range ballistic missiles ready to fire within minutes has evaporated. Moreover, nuclear weapons have little if any relevance to the "Global War on Terrorism" - terrorists are unlikely to be deterred by fear of a U.S. nuclear attack, and the president is unlikely to order one.

Reflecting these new realities, Gen. James Cartwright, commander of America's strategic nuclear forces, has embraced the concept of "Prompt Global Strike" - a Pentagon effort to develop the capability to attack terrorists or weapons of mass destruction worldwide within 60 minutes with conventional weapons. Today, only long-range ballistic missiles have the ability to go anywhere from "zero to sixty" - and all of those missiles are currently armed with nuclear warheads under Cartwright's command. Hence, the general's proposal to equip some of the Navy's submarine-launched Trident D-5 nuclear missiles with a conventional warhead - at a price tag of at least \$500 million.

Even if one is tempted by Cartwright's curious claim that the president should at least have the option of firing a long-range conventional ballistic missile to offset flawed intelligence, it's hard to escape the conclusion that going down this path will undercut America's most urgent national security goal: preventing the proliferation of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons.

Moreover, the use of these missiles - never before fired in combat - might easily lead to greater instability rather than fewer terrorists. Furthermore, the military scenarios used so far to justify the dollar cost of deploying conventional long-range ballistic missiles appear strained - in particular when measured against other urgent defense needs.

First, once the United States starts signaling that long-range ballistic missiles are no different than any other weapon in the war on terrorism, barriers to missile proliferation worldwide will be further eroded. Moreover, "conventional" missiles deployed in North Korea, Iran, India or Pakistan could easily be converted to carry nuclear weapons - the reason the United States and other nations have sought for decades to discourage the proliferation and use of conventional or nuclear ballistic missiles in every region of the globe.

Second, the notion that conventional long-range ballistic missiles are an indispensable silver bullet for our military deserves close scrutiny. In short: We know where rogue regimes are located, we know where "ungoverned" areas provide terrorist havens, and we are improving our existing conventional capabilities to deal with these threats - including precision guided bombs and cruise missiles carried on strategic and tactical aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and submarines. Moreover, it is far from clear that using a conventional long-range ballistic missile would in practice be "quicker" than using other conventional assets given challenges associated with identifying and locating targets, receiving authority to fire, and having submarines in position to shoot.

There may be other scenarios - for example, using U.S. long-range conventional ballistic missiles to preemptively strike North Korean ballistic missiles or China's nuclear forces during a conflict over Taiwan. But if North Korea were about to launch a nuclear missile at America, there would be more - much more - than conventional Trident missiles heading toward North Korea. And a U.S. conventional ballistic missile attack against China's nuclear forces would run a big risk of nuclear retaliation by China.

Third, an attack involving long-range conventional ballistic missiles almost anywhere one contemplates their use (e.g., the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, Iran, Syria) is certain to get the attention of local populations - most likely Muslim - and further incite them in their opposition to the United States. Our struggle against radical Islam must be more than just a struggle to reduce the time to target Muslim nations.

Finally, Congress should look closely at the opportunity cost of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on conventional long-range ballistic missiles compared with other urgent defense priorities - for example, global port security, including radiation detection systems; National Guard and Army Reserve forces; and Nunn-Lugar programs to dismantle nuclear, chemical and biological arms overseas.

Cartwright and his command should be commended for thinking of how Strategic Command can help defeat terrorists. Congress and the American people must now decide whether making long-range ballistic missiles more usable weapons makes strategic sense.

Steve Andreasen was director for defense policy and arms control on the National Security Council from 1993 to 2001.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/editorial/14091807.htm>

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