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New York Times
March 15, 2006

In Iran, Dissenting Voices Rise on Its Leaders' Nuclear Strategy

By Michael Slackman

TEHRAN, March 14 — Just weeks ago, the Iranian government's combative approach toward building a nuclear program produced rare public displays of unity here. Now, while the top leaders remain resolute in their course, cracks are opening both inside and outside the circles of power over the issue.

Some people in powerful positions have begun to insist that the confrontational tactics of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have been backfiring, making it harder instead of easier for Iran to develop a nuclear program.

This week, the United Nations Security Council is meeting to take up the Iranian nuclear program. That referral and, perhaps more important, Iran's inability so far to win Russia's unequivocal support for its plans have empowered critics of Mr. Ahmadinejad, according to political analysts with close ties to the government.

One senior Iranian official, who asked to remain anonymous because of the delicate nature of the issue, said: "I tell you, if what they were doing was working, we would say, 'Good.'" But, he added: "For 27 years after the revolution, America wanted to get Iran to the Security Council and America failed. In less than six months, Ahmadinejad did that."

One month ago, the same official had said with a laugh that those who thought the hard-line approach was a bad choice were staying silent because it appeared to be succeeding.

As usual in Iran, there are mixed signals, and the government does not always speak with the same voice.

On Tuesday, both Mr. Ahmadinejad and the nation's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, insisted in public speeches that their country would never back down. At the same time, Iranian negotiators arrived in Moscow to resume talks — at Iran's request — just days after Iran had rejected a Russian proposal to resolve the standoff.

Average Iranians do not seem uniformly confident at the prospect of being hit with United Nations sanctions.

From the streets of Tehran to the ski slopes outside the city, some people have begun to joke about the catch phrase of the government — flippantly saying, "Nuclear energy is our irrefutable right."

Reformers, whose political clout as a movement vanished after the last election, have also begun to speak out. And people with close ties to the government said high-ranking clerics had begun to give criticism of Iran's position to Ayatollah Khamenei, which the political elite sees as a seismic jolt.

"There has been no sign that they will back down," said Ahmad Zeidabady, a political analyst and journalist. "At least Mr. Khamenei has said nothing that we can interpret that there will be change in the policies."

But, he said, "There is more criticism as it is becoming more clear that this policy is not working, especially by those who were in the previous negotiating team."

There are also signs that negotiators are starting to back away, however slightly, from a bare-knuckle strategy and that those who had initially opposed the president's style — but remained silent — are beginning to feel vindicated and are starting to speak up.

A former president, Mohammad Khatami, recently publicly criticized the aggressive approach and called a return to his government's strategy of confidence-building with the west.

"The previous team now feels they were vindicated," said Nasser Hadian, a political science professor at Tehran University who is close to many members of the government. "The new team feels they have to justify their actions."

Ayatollah Khamenei, who has the final say, issued a strong defense of Iran's position on Tuesday.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran considers retreat over the nuclear issue, which is the demand of the Iranian people, as breaking the country's independence that will impose huge costs on the Iranian nation," he said.

"Peaceful use of nuclear technology is a must and is necessary for scientific growth in all fields," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "Any kind of retreat will bring a series of pressures and retreats. So, this is an irreversible path and our foreign diplomacy should defend this right courageously."

In a speech in northern Iran, Mr. Ahmadinejad called on the people to "be angry" at the pressure being put on Iran. "Listen well," the president said to a crowd chanting "die" as they punched the air with their fists. "A nuclear program is our irrefutable right."

When Mr. Ahmadinejad took office, he embraced a decision already made by the top leadership to move toward confrontation with the West about the nuclear program. From the sidelines, Mr. Ahmadinejad's opponents remained largely silent as his political capital grew.

Iran's ability to begin uranium enrichment, and to remove the seals in January at least three nuclear facilities without any immediate consequences, was initially seen as a validation of the get-tough approach.

But one political scientist who speaks regularly with members of the Foreign Ministry said that Iran had hinged much of its strategy on winning Russia's support. The political scientist asked not to be identified so as not to compromise his relationship with people in the government.

The political scientist said some negotiators believed that by being hostile to the West they would be able to entice Moscow into making Tehran its stronghold in the Middle East. "They thought the turn east was the way forward," the person said. "That was a belief and a vision."

The person added, "They thought, 99 percent, Russia would seize the opportunity and back the Iranian leaders."

The route forward remains unclear as Iran tries to regain a sense of momentum.

There is a consensus here that Iran has many cards to play — from its influence with the Shiites in Iraq to its closer ties to Hezbollah in Lebanon, to the prospect of using oil as a weapon. But the uncertainty of appearing before the Security Council, and the prospect of sanctions, has led some here to begin to rethink the wisdom of fighting the West head-on, analysts said.

Professor Hadian said he believed that for Iran to fundamentally change course the situation for Iran would have to first grow much worse.

"There are concerns to keep the situation calm," said Mr. Zeidabady, the journalist. "We have received orders not even to have headlines saying the case has been sent to the Security Council. Although the situation is very critical, they want to pretend that everything is normal. They do not want to show the country is coming under pressure and lose their supporters."

Nazila Fathi contributed reporting for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/15/international/middleeast/15iran.html>

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New York Times
March 15, 2006

Text On Iran's Nuclear Work Is Under Study By U.N. Council

By Warren Hoge

UNITED NATIONS, March 14 — Security Council members got their first look at a proposed statement on Iran's nuclear program on Tuesday, but the session failed to settle key differences, and more meetings were scheduled for Thursday and Friday.

The Council received the dossier on Iran last week from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear monitor for the United Nations, based in Vienna.

The action satisfied a longtime goal of Washington's to bring the question before the Council, and its five permanent members: Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

The United States and its European partners now want a statement adopted by consensus, issued in the name of the Council president, calling on Iran to suspend activities that the West believes are concealing a nuclear arms program.

The draft text, drawn up by France and Britain and backed by the United States, notes with concern activities by Tehran "resulting in the absence of confidence" that the program "is exclusively for peaceful purposes."

It was shared with the 10 nonpermanent Council members Tuesday during an informal meeting at the mission of France.

The principal dispute so far appears to center on the reluctance of China and Russia to place the Council, instead of the International Atomic Energy Agency, known as the I.A.E.A., in judgment of Tehran.

"What we want to focus on is this message: to reinforce the I.A.E.A., not to replace the I.A.E.A.," said Wang Guangya, the ambassador of China.

Russia's ambassador, Andrei Denisov, said his purpose was to decide "how to better support the I.A.E.A." rather than how to have the Council censure Tehran.

Their objections arise from a part of the text that requests the director general of the agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, to report on Iranian compliance with demands to the Security Council. The Chinese and Russians say this is replacing the agency's authority with that of the Council.

In its principal sections, the text calls on Tehran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, to reconsider construction of a heavy water research reactor and to put into effect the "additional protocol" to the country's nuclear agreement that gives inspectors the right to ask for exceptional access to plants.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking during a visit to Indonesia, said she was unconcerned about the reported rebuff by China and Russia.

"I'm content to let diplomacy continue for a while before we determine what the outcome is going to be," Ms. Rice said. "I'm quite certain we'll find an appropriate vehicle for expressing the international community's solidarity."

The United States has suggested that if Iran does not accede to the nuclear agency demands, the Council will eventually have to look at the possibility of sanctions. But at this stage, the talk is focused on the much lesser action represented by a presidential statement.

Asked how long the current phrase would continue, Ambassador Wang said, "I know the time is very much urgent, and I think that we must take urgent actions, but I believe that there is still room for diplomatic activity."

The additional meetings later this week are also to be informal ones, held off premises and far from the Security Council chamber, which is the center of action at the United Nations. Mr. Bolton said the five nations remained united in their opposition to Iran's getting nuclear weapons.

But warning that time was precious, he cited a comment from Hassan Rowhani, a former chief nuclear negotiator for Iran, in The New York Times on Monday.

Mr. Rowhani was quoted as saying Iran had used negotiations with the Europeans as a pretext for secretly mastering a key stage in the nuclear fuel process — the conversion of uranium yellowcake at its Isfahan plant.

"So these negotiations that the Iranians like to have are not cost-free," Mr. Bolton said.

"They were able to buy time, by their own admission," he said. "I couldn't make this stuff up. So what the Iranians themselves are saying, that's why our negotiation process will not be indefinite."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/15/international/middleeast/15nations.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin

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(Editor's Note: Hyperlink to referenced document follows article.)

Washington Post

March 16, 2006

Pg. 1

Bush To Restate Terror Strategy

2002 Doctrine of Preemptive War To Be Reaffirmed

By Peter Baker, Washington Post Staff Writer

President Bush plans to issue a new national security strategy today reaffirming his doctrine of preemptive war against terrorists and hostile states with chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, despite the troubled experience in Iraq.

The long-overdue document, an articulation of U.S. strategic priorities that is required by law, lays out a robust view of America's power and an assertive view of its responsibility to bring change around the world. On topics including genocide, human trafficking and AIDS, the strategy describes itself as "idealistic about goals and realistic about means."

The strategy expands on the original security framework developed by the Bush administration in September 2002, before the invasion of Iraq. That strategy shifted U.S. foreign policy away from decades of deterrence and containment toward a more aggressive stance of attacking enemies before they attack the United States.

The preemption doctrine generated fierce debate at the time, and many critics believe the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq fatally undermined an essential assumption of the strategy -- that intelligence about an enemy's capabilities and intentions can be sufficient to justify preventive war.

In his revised version, Bush offers no second thoughts about the preemption policy, saying it "remains the same" and defending it as necessary for a country in the "early years of a long struggle" akin to the Cold War. In a nod to critics in Europe, the document places a greater emphasis on working with allies and declares diplomacy to be "our strong preference" in tackling the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

"If necessary, however, under long-standing principles of self defense, we do not rule out use of force before attacks occur, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack," the document continues. "When the consequences of an attack with WMD are potentially so devastating, we cannot afford to stand idly by as grave dangers materialize."

Such language could be seen as provocative at a time when the United States and its European allies have brought Iran before the U.N. Security Council to answer allegations that it is secretly developing nuclear weapons. At a news conference in January, Bush described an Iran with nuclear arms as a "grave threat to the security of the world." Some security specialists criticized the continued commitment to preemption. "Preemption is and always will be a potentially useful tool, but it's not something you want to trot out and throw in everybody's face," said Harlan Ullman, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "To have a strategy on preemption and make it central is a huge error."

A military attack against Iran, for instance, could be "foolish," Ullman said, and it would be better to seek other ways to influence its behavior. "I think most states are deterrable."

Thomas Donnelly, a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute who has written on the 2002 strategy, said the 2003 invasion of Iraq in the strict sense is not an example of preemptive war, because it was preceded by 12 years of low-grade conflict and was essentially the completion of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Still, he said, recent problems there contain lessons for those who would advocate preemptive war elsewhere. A military strike is not enough, he said; building a sustainable, responsible state in place of a rogue nation is the real challenge.

"We have to understand preemption -- it's not going to be simply a preemptive strike," he said. "That's not the end of the exercise but the beginning of the exercise."

The White House plans to release the 49-page National Security Strategy today, starting with a speech by national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley to the U.S. Institute of Peace. The White House gave advance copies to The Washington Post and three other newspapers.

The strategy has no legal force of its own but serves as a guidepost for agencies and officials drawing up policies in a range of military, diplomatic and other arenas. Although a 1986 law requires that the strategy be revised annually, this is the first new version since 2002. "I don't think it's a change in strategy," Hadley said in an interview. "It's an updating of where we are with the strategy, given the time that's passed and the events that have occurred."

But the new version of the strategy underscores in a more thematic way Bush's desire to make the spread of democracy the fundamental underpinning of U.S. foreign policy, as he expressed in his second inaugural address last year. The opening words of the strategy, in fact, are lifted from that speech: "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world."

The strategy commits the administration to speaking out against human rights abuses, holding high-level meetings at the White House with reformers from repressive nations, using foreign aid to support elections and civil society, and applying sanctions against oppressive governments. It makes special mention of religious intolerance, subjugation of women and human trafficking.

At the same time, it acknowledges that "elections alone are not enough" and sometimes lead to undesirable results. "These principles are tested by the victory of Hamas candidates in the recent elections in the Palestinian territories," the strategy says, referring to the radical group designated as a terrorist organization by the United States.

Without saying what action would be taken against them, the strategy singles out seven nations as prime examples of "despotic systems" -- North Korea, Iran, Syria, Cuba, Belarus, Burma and Zimbabwe. Iran and North Korea receive particular attention because of their nuclear programs, and the strategy vows in both cases "to take all necessary measures" to protect the United States against them.

"We may face no greater challenge from a single country than from Iran," the document says, echoing a statement made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice last week. It recommits to efforts with European allies to pressure Tehran to give up any aspirations of nuclear weapons, then adds ominously: "This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided."

The language about confrontation is not repeated with North Korea, which says it already has nuclear bombs, an assertion believed by U.S. intelligence. But Pyongyang is accused of a "bleak record of duplicity and bad-faith negotiations," as well as of counterfeiting U.S. currency, trafficking in drugs and starving its own people.

The strategy offers a much more skeptical view of Russia than in 2002, when the glow of Bush's friendship with President Vladimir Putin was still bright.

"Recent trends regrettably point toward a diminishing commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions," it says. "We will work to try to persuade the Russian Government to move forward, not backward, along freedom's path."

It also warns China that "it must act as a responsible stakeholder that fulfills its obligations" and guarantee political freedom as well as economic freedom. "Our strategy," the document says, "seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities."

To assuage allies antagonized by Bush's go-it-alone style in his first term, the White House stresses alliance and the use of what it calls "transformational diplomacy" to achieve change. At the same time, it asserts that formal structures such as the United Nations or NATO may at times be less effective than "coalitions of the willing," or groups responding to particular situations, such as the Asian tsunami of 2004.

Beyond the military response to terrorism, the document emphasizes the need to fight the war of ideas against Islamic radicals whose anti-American rhetoric has won wide sympathy in parts of the world.

The strategy also addresses topics largely left out of the 2002 version, including a section on genocide and a new chapter on global threats such as avian influenza, AIDS, environmental destruction and natural disasters. Critics have accused the administration of not doing enough to stop genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan, responding too slowly to the Asian tsunami and disregarding global environmental threats such as climate change.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/15/AR2006031502297.html>

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The National Security Strategy

March 2006

INTRODUCTION

My Fellow Americans,

America is at war. This is a wartime national security strategy required by the grave challenge we face – the rise of terrorism fueled by an aggressive ideology of hatred and murder, fully revealed to the American people on September 11, 2001. This strategy reflects our most solemn obligation: to protect the security of the American people.

America also has an unprecedented opportunity to lay the foundations for future peace. The ideals that have inspired our history – freedom, democracy, and human dignity – are increasingly inspiring individuals and nations throughout the world. And because free nations tend toward peace, the advance of liberty will make America more secure.

These inseparable priorities – fighting and winning the war on terror and promoting freedom as the alternative to tyranny and despair – have now guided American policy for more than 4 years.

We have kept on the offensive against terrorist networks, leaving our enemy weakened, but not yet defeated.

We have joined with the Afghan people to bring down the Taliban regime – the protectors of the al-Qaida network – and aided a new, democratic government to rise in its place.

We have focused the attention of the world on the proliferation of dangerous weapons – although great challenges in this area remain.

We have stood for the spread of democracy in the broader Middle East – meeting challenges yet seeing progress few would have predicted or expected.

We have cultivated stable and cooperative relations with all the major powers of the world.

We have dramatically expanded our efforts to encourage economic development and the hope it brings – and focused these efforts on the promotion of reform and achievement of results.

We led an international coalition to topple the dictator of Iraq, who had brutalized his own people, terrorized his region, defied the international community, and sought and used weapons of mass destruction.

And we are fighting alongside Iraqis to secure a united, stable, and democratic Iraq – a new ally in the war on terror in the heart of the Middle East.

We have seen great accomplishments, confronted new challenges, and refined our approach as conditions changed.

We have also found that the defense of freedom brings us loss and sorrow, because freedom has determined enemies. We have always known that the war on terror would require great sacrifice – and in this war, we have said farewell to some very good men and women. The terrorists have used dramatic acts of murder – from the streets of Fallujah to the subways of London – in an attempt to undermine our will. The struggle against this enemy – an enemy that targets the innocent without conscience or hesitation – has been difficult. And our work is far from over. America now faces a choice between the path of fear and the path of confidence. The path of fear – isolationism and protectionism, retreat and retrenchment – appeals to those who find our challenges too great and fail to see our opportunities. Yet history teaches that every time American leaders have taken this path, the challenges have only increased and the missed opportunities have left future generations less secure.

This Administration has chosen the path of confidence. We choose leadership over isolationism, and the pursuit of free and fair trade and open markets over protectionism. We choose to deal with challenges now rather than leaving them for future generations. We fight our enemies abroad instead of waiting for them to arrive in our country. We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy. The path we have chosen is consistent with the great tradition of American foreign policy. Like the policies of Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan, our approach is idealistic about our national goals, and realistic about the means to achieve them.

To follow this path, we must maintain and expand our national strength so we can deal with threats and challenges before they can damage our people or our interests. We must maintain a military without peer – yet our strength is not founded on force of arms alone. It also rests on economic prosperity and a vibrant democracy. And it rests on strong alliances, friendships, and international institutions, which enable us to promote freedom, prosperity, and peace in common purpose with others.

Our national security strategy is founded upon two pillars:

The first pillar is promoting freedom, justice, and human dignity – working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies, and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies. Free governments are accountable to their people, govern their territory effectively, and pursue economic and political policies that benefit their citizens. Free governments do not oppress their people or attack other free nations. Peace and international stability are most reliably built on a foundation of freedom.

The second pillar of our strategy is confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies. Many of the problems we face – from the threat of pandemic disease, to proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to terrorism, to human trafficking, to natural disasters – reach across borders. Effective multinational efforts are essential to solve these problems. Yet history has shown that only when we do our part will others do theirs. America must continue to lead.

GEORGE W. BUSH

THE WHITE HOUSE

March 16, 2006

(For entire report, please click link below.)

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006/>

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Los Angeles Times

March 16, 2006

Bush Confronted On Nuclear Pact

While speaking about Medicare, the president gets a surprise challenge from a negotiator of the nonproliferation treaty that India never signed.

By Peter Wallsten, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Two weeks after signing a controversial nuclear cooperation agreement with India, President Bush had a surprise encounter Wednesday with one of the original negotiators of the very anti-nuclear treaty that critics say is threatened by the deal.

The exchange capped an afternoon of unusually confrontational questions posed to Bush by a public audience — a change for a White House that has frequently organized friendly crowds to show Bush in a positive light.

The India challenge came from Lawrence Weiler, 85, a resident at the Washington-area retirement center that was the venue for the Wednesday event, intended to promote the president's new Medicare prescription drug program. When Bush opened the floor to questions, and one man stood to thank the president for making U.S. civil nuclear technology available to India, Weiler could not contain himself.

"Mr. President, there are some — and I guess I would include myself — who have different views about the Indian agreement, because they're concerned about the effect that the agreement will have on the capacity of India to stimulate its own production of nuclear weapons," he said.

Weiler told Bush that he was one of the few surviving negotiators of the 1970 Nonproliferation Treaty, which was ratified by the world's major nuclear powers and more than 180 other nations to limit the spread of nuclear weapons. India never signed the treaty, and critics charge that Bush's plan to let U.S. firms begin sharing civil nuclear technology with India would help that country expand its weapons program and invigorate a nuclear arms race by inspiring other nations to ignore the treaty.

Weiler, who worked for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, went on to ask Bush to consider adopting a "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons as an additional enticement to keep the treaty intact.

"The basic bargain there was that other countries would give up their nuclear weapons if we, the nuclear powers, would engage in a program of nuclear disarmament," he told Bush. "The point is that we cannot expect that agreement, that basic agreement, to hold if the United States ... has the position that we might initiate a nuclear war if it is necessary."

Bush nodded but made no promises. "I'll take your words to heart, and think about it," he told Weiler. "Thank you. No commitment standing right here, of course."

Bush had not been challenged directly on the deal since his trip to India this month, which aides hailed as a success due largely to the agreement between the U.S. president and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

As part of the deal, which requires the approval of Congress and of the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group, India agreed to open 14 of its 22 nuclear reactors to international inspectors for the first time.

India retains the right to keep its other reactors secret for military purposes, and to build as many additional weapons-producing facilities as it wishes. Bush on Wednesday called the agreement a victory for limiting the spread of weapons.

"Part of the Indian deal is to actually get them to formally join some of the institutions that you helped — your work created," Bush told Weiler.

Earlier in his comments, Bush praised the agreement as a boon for the environment and a way to cut U.S. gas prices. "When India's demand for fossil fuels goes up, it causes the price of our fossil fuels to go up," he said. "And so, therefore, to encourage them to use a renewable source of energy that doesn't create greenhouse gas, this makes a lot of sense."

The agreement is also backed by nuclear technology firms that stand to make billions of dollars by selling to India. As the White House prepares to lobby Congress to approve the deal, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice signaled one of its contentions in a Washington Post op-ed article this week when she predicted the agreement would mean "thousands of new jobs for American workers."

But Rep. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), who has spearheaded a coalition to oppose the deal, questioned the contentions made by Bush and Rice.

He said that India currently produced a tiny fraction of its power from oil and that its clear aim was to sharply escalate its weapons production.

Markey pointed to reports this week that Russia was considering reviving an old proposal to sell nuclear technologies to India — a deal that the U.S. once helped block — and that other nations such as China and Iran would follow suit.

"It's a domino effect that will lead to the complete collapse of the nuclear proliferation regime that's been protecting our planet for a generation," he said.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-bush16mar16.1.1038568.story?coll=la-headlines-nation>

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Miami Herald
March 16, 2006

Iran Threatens Europeans

Iran said it will retaliate against Britain, France and Germany if the U.N. Security Council tries to shut down the nation's nuclear program.

By Jonathan S. Landay

WASHINGTON - Iran has privately threatened Britain, France and Germany that it will escalate the crisis over its nuclear program "beyond Europe's control" in retaliation for any steps the U.N. Security Council takes to force it to abandon uranium enrichment.

Iranian diplomats delivered the warning verbally in meetings Monday with foreign ministry officials in London, Berlin and Paris, said a U.S. official and a Western diplomat who spoke only on condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the issue.

It was left unclear how or whether the Islamic regime would fulfill its threat. Germany and France are Iran's largest trading partners.

The Iranians could resort to the same measures they could use to carry out a threat to cause "harm and pain" to the United States, including terrorism and disruptions of global petroleum supplies. Iran is the world's fourthlargest oil producer.

"They were not specific" about retaliatory steps they might take, the Western diplomat said. "It was difficult to interpret. It was all based upon the brinkmanship rhetoric that we've come to expect from them."

Meanwhile, the veto-wielding Security Council members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- failed Wednesday to agree on a draft statement designed to step up pressure on Iran if it doesn't heed demands that it suspend all uranium-enrichment work. The process produces low-enriched uranium for power plants -- Iran's professed goal -- and highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons, which U.S. and European officials contend is the true purpose of the Iranian program.

The U.N. negotiations were to continue, and U.S. and European officials said they were optimistic that an agreement could be reached.

Iran insists that it has the right to peaceful enrichment under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the key safeguard of the global system designed to stop the spread of nuclear weapons. But it has admitted that it hid its project, including purchases of weapons-related know-how and technology from a smuggling ring, from U.N. monitors for 18 years. The Security Council has the power to slap economic and political sanctions on Iran. The United States says it would seek such action only as a final response to persistent intransigence. Russia and China oppose sanctions. The U.S. official said the White House was told that the Iranian warnings delivered in London, Berlin and Paris threatened "escalation beyond Europe's control" if the Security Council approved "coercive measures."

"They also threatened that if attacked, Iran would no longer follow 'certain NPT rules,' presumably including rules against acquiring nuclear weapons," the U.S. official said. "It looks to us like Iran has made a clear decision to up the rhetorical ante, calculating that fears of military conflict will compel Europe and Russia to back down." President Bush has refused to rule out using military force against Iranian nuclear facilities, an option that the Europeans and Russia oppose.

"It was quite clear from the messages . . . that they were demonstrating no flexibility in their position," the Western diplomat said.

The U.N. Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors referred Iran to the Security Council after it defied demands to refreeze uranium-enrichment work and to disclose its programs fully to international inspectors.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/14109592.htm>

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Washington Post
March 17, 2006
Pg. 15

U.S. Releases First Of Seized Iraqi Papers

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

Responding to pressure from Congress, Director of National Intelligence John D. Negroponte yesterday released the first handful of Iraqi documents out of more than 2 million captured during the invasion of Iraq.

The nine documents were posted on a military Web site. The remaining documents, which are in Arabic and are not translated, "will be regularly uploaded as they are cleared for public release," according to a statement from Negroponte's office.

The documents, stored in about 50,000 boxes at a U.S. facility in Doha, Qatar, were seized from various Iraqi agencies by U.S. and coalition forces during the 2003 invasion and have been reviewed by officials for useful intelligence.

Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.) chairman of the House intelligence committee, had pushed Negroponte to release the documents in hopes that readers would closely peruse them for information about prewar Iraq. "Whether Saddam Hussein destroyed Iraq's weapons of mass destruction or hid or transferred them, the most important thing is that we discover the truth of what was happening in the country prior to the war," he said.

Hoekstra said the idea is to "unleash the power of the Internet, unleash the power of the blogosphere" to help find out what is in the documents, which he described as "the crumbs that were left" by Hussein's policy of destroying records.

In releasing the material, intelligence officials added an unusual warning: "The U.S. government has made no determination regarding the authenticity of the documents, validity or factual accuracy of the information contained therein."

Several pages of one document indicate that Iraqi intelligence officials in August 2002 were searching for members of the al-Qaeda organization who were reported to be in Iraq. One document indicates that al-Qaeda had Iraqi supporters. Several photos are attached, including one that appears to be of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian terrorist leader now operating in Iraq. Underneath the picture in the Iraqi document is Zarqawi's real name, Ahmed Fadeel Nazzal al-Khalayleh.

In an October 2002 speech, President Bush first referred to Zarqawi, though not by name, as an associate of Osama bin Laden's who was in Baghdad, which indicated a link between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda.

The English-language synopsis supplied by Negroponte's office for the Iraqi document says the presence of the terrorist group was "later confirmed."

Another of the released documents, from November 2001, sought more information about rumors that Islamic fighters were responding to the post-Sept. 11 U.S. attack on al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. "Chatter among the population that there is a group of Iraqi and Saudi volunteers estimated at 3000 men have traveled unofficially (illegally) to Afghanistan and joined the Mujahedeen to fight with them and help them in thwarting the imperialist American Zionist attack." The Iraqi intelligence official wanted to see if there was more information available on that subject. The Iraqi documents, which will eventually include papers from the 1991 Persian Gulf War, can be found at <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/products-docex.htm>, a Web site run by the U.S. Army Foreign Military Studies Office.

Staff writers Nora Boustany and Charles Babington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/16/AR2006031602212.html>

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New York Times

March 17, 2006

Many In Congress Want To Change Nuclear Deal With India

By Joel Brinkley

WASHINGTON, March 16 — As Congressional debate began Thursday on bills that would approve the Bush administration's nuclear deal with India, many Senate and House members were telling administration officials that they wanted to rewrite parts of the agreement.

The administration contends that would kill the deal. "This is a complex agreement, and if we were to reopen it, we would never be able to reassemble it again," said R. Nicholas Burns, under secretary of state for political affairs.

The leaders of the House and the Senate Foreign Relations Committees introduced bills on Thursday to authorize the deal. But the Republican chairmen of the committees made it clear that they did not necessarily support the legislation and were introducing it only as a favor to the White House. The news release from Henry J. Hyde of Illinois, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, placed the words "at the request" of the administration in capital letters.

This week, Mr. Hyde said he believed members of Congress "may seek conditions for its approval." An aide said that could mean reopening the deal and making changes.

Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, issued a noncommittal statement, saying he looked forward to "fulfilling our Constitutional role in this important matter." An aide said he had not decided if the deal should be modified.

Under a plan made last July, the United States would help India build nuclear power plants, and India would allow regular international inspections of its civilian reactors. Its nuclear weapons program would remain secret.

President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reached a formal agreement on Mr. Bush's visit to New Delhi this month. But the deal is subject to the approval of Congress and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the nations that control nuclear trade. And the deal violates American law and the suppliers' group practice because India has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Concerns over proliferation and the continued secrecy of India's nuclear weapons program leave many members of Congress wary. Representative Tom Lantos, the California Democrat, agreed to co-sponsor the bill with Mr. Hyde, though he is undecided. Lynne A. Weil, an aide, said Mr. Lantos "is aware that the questions it raises about nuclear non-proliferation are profound."

Mr. Burns said Thursday, "We are confident we can answer the critics." The debate, he acknowledged, is likely to take months, and he said the vast majority of senators and representatives remained undecided. Congressional officials agreed.

"A great number of members of Congress need to have further discussion and further testimony," he said.

Acknowledging that the administration has a long way to go to win majority support in Congress, he added: "We are encouraged by the numbers of senators and representatives who tell us, 'You are on the right track. We like the agreement.'"

President Bush met with Congressional leaders to discuss the proposal last week. Extensive hearings are planned in the Senate and the House. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is scheduled to testify in early April.

"This is a complex agreement with profound implications," Mr. Hyde said. "Congress will need to take a close look."

One reason the administration says it is not worried about allowing India to continue its nuclear program in secret is the view that "India has had an excellent record over the last 30 years in nondiversion" of nuclear materials, Mr. Burns said.

Last week, David Albright, a former United Nations nuclear inspector, concluded in a report that "onward proliferation" of Indian nuclear materials "is expected to become a serious problem" because India must get material for its weapons program in secret through "illegal or questionable overseas procurements." It also said India's export "control system is poorly implemented." Mr. Burns said he had not read the full report, "but we are happy to sit down and talk" with Mr. Albright.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/17/politics/17diplo.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin

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Washington Post

March 17, 2006

Pg. 1

No Hope For Stockpile Of New Anthrax Vaccine By November

Developer Seeks Extension After Setback on Crucial Test

By Justin Gillis, Washington Post Staff Writer

The government's \$1 billion effort to develop a new anthrax vaccine has run into difficulty, with the company in charge of the project reporting failure in a major human test and falling at least a year behind schedule.

Officers at VaxGen Inc. of Brisbane, Calif., said in interviews that they believe they have isolated the problem with their vaccine and are well on their way to fixing it. But they acknowledged that they have no hope of meeting a deadline to deliver 25 million doses of the vaccine into a national stockpile by November and will default on their contract with the government unless it grants an extension they have requested.

The difficulties appear to confirm predictions on Capitol Hill two years ago that a small company like VaxGen wouldn't be able to meet an aggressive schedule for stockpiling millions of doses of a new anthrax vaccine. Until the full stockpile of 75 million doses is ready, the United States would depend on antibiotics to treat a large-scale anthrax attack, a strategy that terrorists could overcome by creating antibiotic-resistant anthrax.

Administrators at the Health and Human Services Department declined to discuss specifics of the VaxGen contract. But they said that, despite some setbacks, they are building a national defense against anthrax spores, among the most fearsome of bioterror weapons. In particular, they noted, they have already stockpiled enough antibiotics to treat 40 million people after a large-scale attack.

"I think overall we are certainly making progress in our anthrax preparedness program," said Gerald Parker, the chief deputy in an HHS office that manages emergency preparations.

With the VaxGen product delayed, the government recently bought 5 million doses of an older, controversial anthrax vaccine, enough to treat fewer than 2 million people, and hopes to order more when funds are identified.

The anthrax program is emblematic of larger problems in Project BioShield, President Bush's ambitious biowarfare defense program. It's becoming clear that many of the robust national safeguards against biological and radiological

terrorism that Bush promised when he got Congress to create BioShield simply won't be ready any time soon. HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt told Congress yesterday that "more can and must be done to aggressively and efficiently implement Project BioShield," and he pledged to reorganize the responsible office.

An injection of federal money into the program, \$5.6 billion over a decade plus additional research funds, has piqued the interest of biotechnology companies. But many analysts say the research and development needed to create new products is moving at a glacial pace.

Moreover, most of the nation's biggest drug companies have eschewed the program, seeing little profit but big risk to their reputations if they mess up a high-profile government contract.

The government has thus had to depend on small, financially shaky biotechnology companies. Yet in contrast to the way the Pentagon buys goods, HHS lacks the legal authority to use public funds extensively to shore up companies. It can pay them up to 10 percent of the value of a contract in advance, but that isn't much -- the seemingly mundane tasks of building production lines and perfecting large-scale manufacturing techniques are riddled with pitfalls and can eat up tens or even hundreds of millions in capital.

The companies can get research subsidies early in a project, and they stand to receive hefty government payments at the end, after they deliver a product. But they must finance the expensive middle stages largely on their own.

Biotech companies have dubbed that financing gap the "Valley of Death," and it remains to be seen if any of them can get to the other side of it on a major BioShield contract.

Companies have complained bitterly on Capitol Hill that the government has worsened that problem by doing a poor job of laying out its requirements and of issuing contracts expeditiously.

"There should be a sense of expediency and urgency to get these products developed and stockpiled," said Richard B. Hollis, head of Hollis-Eden Pharmaceuticals Inc., a San Diego company that has spent more than \$70 million developing a treatment that would be used after a nuclear or radiological explosion. His company has been hammered in the stock market by perceived delays in the government's plans to purchase the drug.

William Hall, an HHS spokesman, said that the government is aware of companies' complaints and is trying to move rapidly but that it also has to take great care in analyzing potential terrorist threats and deciding which treatments and antidotes are worth the taxpayers' money. BioShield's funding "is not a bottomless pit," he said.

Supported by government contracts totaling close to \$1 billion, the VaxGen program is a showcase of how BioShield is supposed to work. VaxGen is assigned to produce 75 million doses of vaccine, enough to treat 25 million people after an attack -- roughly equivalent to the entire populations of the Washington and New York metropolitan areas.

That stockpile was originally supposed to be in place by next year. But at the current rate it will be completed no sooner than 2008 or 2009, long after the anthrax attacks of late 2001 prompted the government to promise a better defense.

VaxGen, despite a troubled financial history, has managed to raise \$148 million based on its anthrax contracts. It has built a \$20 million production facility in South San Francisco, Calif., has hired a staff of 300 and is producing test lots of anthrax vaccine. Money shortages don't appear to have played any role in the recent problems with the vaccine.

But the company's finances are still wobbly, and with at least a year's delay looming before the vaccine is ready, VaxGen's ability to survive long enough to fulfill its contract with the government remains in doubt.

"The so-called Valley of Death is long and hot," said Lance Ignon, VaxGen's vice president for corporate affairs. "How we emerge will be very important -- it will send a strong signal to the rest of the industry."

Efforts are afoot on Capitol Hill to solve the financing problem by creating a biodefense agency with greater contracting powers than HHS. But the proposal has been criticized across the political spectrum because the agency would be exempt from open-government requirements.

VaxGen has been signaling problems in its vaccine program to Wall Street for many months and disclosed in early November that a year's delay was likely, sending its stock plunging 33 percent. But the scientific details of its problems were unclear before now.

In interviews recently in South San Francisco, VaxGen officers laid out the trouble in detail. They refused to release copies of data from the key human trial that their vaccine flunked, saying the material has not been fully reviewed by the government, but they showed the data to a reporter.

The test, completed last year, revealed an unexpected problem with the strength of the vaccine. Analysis eventually revealed that the vaccine was unstable -- any given batch was losing potency within months. That is a potentially disastrous problem, since the whole point of the vaccine is to sit on a shelf for years, ready for use the moment anthrax is unleashed.

Once they understood it, the VaxGen scientists said, the problem was easy to solve by adding an ingredient. But they can't be certain that fix has worked until they run additional tests, including a human test scheduled to begin

later this year. HHS declined to comment on the problem but said VaxGen was required to deliver a product of acceptable stability to the government.

Hall, the HHS spokesman, noted that the government also encountered delays several years ago when it sought to stockpile smallpox vaccine but eventually solved them and acquired enough for every American.

Even when the shelf-life problem is solved, the anthrax vaccine will still be something of an unknown quantity.

VaxGen licensed the vaccine from the U.S. Army, which invented it at a laboratory in Frederick, and Army tests show it should work. But naturally occurring anthrax infection is rare, so a new vaccine can't be tested for effectiveness in people. The Food and Drug Administration will have to approve it based on a combination of safety tests in people and effectiveness tests in animals.

With the new vaccine delayed, HHS is stockpiling an older vaccine made by a subsidiary of Emergent Biosolutions Inc., a Gaithersburg company. That vaccine has a checkered history, including lot-to-lot variability and a tendency to cause sore arms and perhaps more serious reactions. Some U.S. soldiers have risked court martial rather than take the vaccine.

If a large anthrax attack happened tomorrow, that vaccine plus antibiotics would be the defenses the government would have to offer people who had been exposed but weren't yet ill. When the same vaccine was offered in 2001 to people potentially exposed to letters containing anthrax spores, many Capitol Hill aides took it, but most postal workers refused, preferring to take their chances using antibiotics alone.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/16/AR2006031602285.html>

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