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Articles & Other Documents:

[U.S. Eyes Baghdad For Talks With Iran](#)

[German Trial Promises A Look Into The Nuclear Black Market](#)

[Suppose We Just Let Iran Have The Bomb](#)

[Iran's Secret Talks With Iraqi Militants Spark Fears Of Proxy War](#)

[Smallpox Drill Tests Readiness](#)

[Army Sees No Toxic Threat In Sea Dump](#)

[Documents Link Saddam, Weapons Banned Since '20s](#)

[Top U.N. Members To Try To Break Stalemate On Iran](#)

[Tehran Courts Support Of Arabs](#)

['US Could Wipe Out Iran Nukes In 2 Days'](#)

[Director Says Missile Defense Has 'Turned Corner'](#)

[Nunn Urges Congress To Set Conditions On U.S.-India Nuclear Pact](#)

[Pakistan Cruise Missile Test-Fired By Army](#)

[Speaking To Tehran, With One Voice](#)

[Chertoff: Chemical plants must beef up security](#)

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Washington Times

March 18, 2006

Pg. 1

U.S. Eyes Baghdad For Talks With Iran

By Combined Dispatches

BAGHDAD -- The American ambassador said yesterday he wants to talk with the Iranians -- but not negotiate -- in Baghdad.

"We are not entering into negotiations about Iraq with Iran. The Iraqis will decide the future of Iraq. We have concerns -- and I've spoken about them -- with regard to Iranian policy in Iraq," U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad told the Associated Press in an interview.

In Washington, the Bush administration said any meeting would have to involve Iraqi leaders, and it expressed concern that Iran might use such a meeting to divert attention from its nuclear program.

"The concern, therefore, is that it is simply a device by the Iranians to try to divert pressure that they are feeling in New York," said National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, referring to talks at the U.N. Security Council. The United States has not decided whether to talk to Iran about its support for armed Shi'ite militias in Iraq, a U.S. official told the AP on the condition of anonymity.

The majority of Iraqis are Shi'ite Muslims. The overwhelming majority of Iranians belong to that sect and are governed by a Shi'ite theocracy.

Many important Shi'ite religious shrines are located in Iraq, meaning that thousands of pilgrims routinely cross the countries' long, common border.

Iraqi Sunnis objected yesterday to any U.S.-Iranian engagement.

"Iran is interfering deeply in Iraqi affairs, and the Iraqi people are afraid that a deal might be settled between Iran and America at the expense of Iraq's independence," said Bashar al-Faydi, a spokesman for the Association of Muslim Scholars.

Mr. Khalilzad said that talks would be limited to Iraq -- not the angry U.S. standoff with Tehran over its nuclear program.

The Afghanistan-born Mr. Khalilzad, who can speak with Iranians in a common language -- his native Dari is a Persian dialect -- insisted there would be no bargaining with Iran.

The 54-year-old ambassador has held talks with Iranians before, when he was envoy to Afghanistan, Iran's neighbor to the east.

"I was authorized by the president of the United States to talk with the Iranians about our concerns about Afghanistan. So I'm doing the same thing now here," he said.

"I think we would assume since these discussions are with regard to our concern with Iranian policies in Iraq that [the talks] should be in Baghdad," Mr. Khalilzad said.

The Iranians said their participation in talks may help Iraqis form a stable government.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will hold talks with the United States about Iraq to help the process of building a government there, and to support the Iraqi people," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said in a speech to worshippers who had gathered at Tehran University for Friday prayers.

Meanwhile, at the United Nations in New York, Chinese Ambassador Wang Guangya said the Security Council should give Iran "four weeks to six weeks" to comply with demands by the U.N. nuclear watchdog that it halt all uranium enrichment activities.

Speaking before a formal meeting of the council on the crisis, Mr. Wang said: "We must leave sufficient time for diplomacy and for the [U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency] to work ... at least four weeks to six weeks."

Russia's U.N. ambassador yesterday also spoke in opposition to proposals for the council to demand a quick progress report on Iran's suspect nuclear program.

He said, reportedly only half in jest, that fast action could lead to the bombing of Iran by June.

Andrey Denisov spoke just before a Security Council meeting in which diplomats considered a revised list of British, French and American proposals for a statement on Iran.

A key sticking point for Russia is a proposal asking Mohamed ElBaradei, the chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to deliver a report in two weeks on Iran's progress toward clearing up suspicions about its nuclear program.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060318-120805-4045r.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

March 18, 2006

German Trial Promises A Look Into The Nuclear Black Market

By Jeffrey Fleishman, Times Staff Writer

BERLIN — A German engineer accused of belonging to a worldwide nuclear smuggling network went on trial Friday for allegedly providing technology to Libya that could have been used to enrich uranium for weapons.

The case, being heard in a Mannheim court, is expected to offer a glimpse of the nuclear black market once masterminded by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. The trial is likely to focus on Western intelligence information, middlemen, money trails and what role German companies may have played in aiding leaders such as Libyan ruler Moammar Kadafi.

Gotthard Lerch, 63, is charged with violating Germany's weapons control and foreign trade acts. He allegedly was paid \$34 million to provide Libya with gas centrifuges and other dual-use technologies.

Lersch had earlier been charged with treason. Prosecutors dropped that charge as part of an agreement with Switzerland, where Lerch had been living, to have him extradited to Germany in 2005.

Lerch has pleaded not guilty. His lawyers argued Friday that they had been denied access to prosecution documents, and they requested that the six judges hearing the case be replaced. Lerch is expected to seek intelligence records from the CIA and other Western spy agencies.

"The trial is hugely important in strengthening international attention to the problem of illegal proliferation," Goetz Neuneck of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg told German radio. "It would be very good for international nonproliferation if the trial were to provide more details and shine more light on dark corners."

Authorities focused on Lerch after the U.S. and Britain seized a shipment of nuclear-related components from a Libya-bound freighter in October 2003. Under Western pressure to abandon its quest for weapons of mass destruction, Libya cooperated with investigators. The seizure also provided details of Khan's dealings with other countries, including North Korea and Iran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, told German prosecutors that Lerch was involved in supplying technology to Libya. He was also mentioned in a Malaysian investigation of smuggling.

The Times reported last year that an IAEA investigator had found that rotors for an advanced centrifuge were delivered for the Libyan project to Khan's operations in Dubai.

The alleged sale of such technology led to Lerch's arrest. Investigators fear that other crucial components collected by the Khan network never arrived in Libya and may have been diverted to another country. The father of Pakistan's nuclear program, Khan was humiliated when he confessed in 2004 that his black market had provided technology to Libya and Iran. He is under house arrest.

In the late 1970s, Lerch, working for a German company that produced nuclear technology, was investigated by German trade authorities for selling centrifuges and pumps to Pakistan. He was never charged. He was also investigated, but again never charged, for allegedly smuggling nuclear blueprints into Switzerland in the 1980s.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-smuggle18mar18,1,1012093.story>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

March 19, 2006

Suppose We Just Let Iran Have The Bomb

By David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON--President Bush's message to Iran these days sounds unambiguous: The United States will do what it takes to keep the mullahs from getting the bomb. Diplomacy is vastly preferred, President Bush and his aides insist. Yet it was no accident that the just-revised National Security Strategy declares: "This diplomatic effort must succeed if confrontation is to be avoided."

To nervous allies, those words echo the run-up to the Iraq invasion, which began three years ago today. But Iran is not Iraq. And some experts in the United States — mostly outside the administration — have been thinking the unthinkable, or at least the undiscussable: If all other options are worse, could the world learn to live with a nuclear Iran?

"The reality is that most of us think the Iranians are probably going to get a weapon, or the technology to make one, sooner or later," an administration official acknowledged a few weeks ago, refusing to talk on the record because such an admission amounts to a concession that dragging Iran in front of the United Nations Security Council may prove an exercise in futility. "The optimists around here just hope we can delay the day by 10 or 20 years, and that by that time we'll have a different relationship with a different Iranian government."

A roll of the dice, for sure. Yet is the risk greater than it was when other countries — from the Soviet Union and China to India and Pakistan — defied the United States to join the nuclear club?

And could deterrence, containment and cool calculation of national interest work to restrain Iran as it worked to restrain America and its competitors during the cold war? Or is that false comfort?

"We've lived with Iran as a terror threat for a generation," says Stephen Biddle, the senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations, making the case that containment could work again. "Iran has a return address, and states with a return address can be retaliated against."

As for concerns that an Iranian nuclear capability would touch off a Middle East arms race, with Egypt and Saudi Arabia trying to join the club, the West would most likely head them off, said Barry R. Posen, a political science professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a Feb. 27 article on The New York Times Op-Ed page. Israel, he said, might finally acknowledge publicly that it has nuclear weapons. But everyone already knows about this capability.

What of the fear that Iran might pass a weapon to Hezbollah or to Al Qaeda in Iraq? Those arguing for a containment strategy say Iran knows that the origins of any detonated bomb would be traced sooner or later, so the mullahs would not be foolish enough to trust proxies with such a weapon.

The Bush administration rejects all such arguments as near madness, especially since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became Iran's president.

"Accommodating a nuclear armed Iran is not in our interests," says R. Nicholas Burns, the under secretary of state for political affairs who will be at the Security Council today to argue for a clear warning to Iran and then a steady escalation of pressure to force it to give up any ability to enrich uranium. "Given the radical nature of Iran under Ahmadinejad and its stated wish to wipe Israel off the map of the world," Mr. Burns continued, "it is entirely unconvincing that we could or should live with a nuclear Iran."

The two views of the Iran threat boil down to this: if Iran is simply a new example of a 60-year-old problem, then classic containment should work in 2016 the way it worked in 1956. But traditional deterrence strategy will not work if Iran is one of the first nightmares of a second nuclear age — in which weapons are pieced together by agents working in the shadows and supplied by networks of private entrepreneurs like Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear engineer who gave the Iranian nuclear program its start.

In this new era, the argument goes, the best way to head off an attack is to prevent loosely controlled (or devious) countries from acquiring the makings of nuclear bombs in the first place. If an attack is staged not from a missile silo but from a basement or a cargo container, it will take time to pinpoint who deserves the blame. By then, the human cost is already too high and retaliation is no longer certain.

The debate is likely to play out for much of the year, based on a series of guesses about Iran's true intentions, and its capabilities. The list of unknowables is long. They range from the technical to the political, from how long it will take Iran's scientists to get their centrifuges running to who will ultimately prevail in Iran's seemingly endless internal battle over its relationship to the Westernized world.

But getting this right requires projecting what happens to America, Israel and Europe, especially if Iran's power to send the price of oil skyrocketing is enhanced by the confidence that a nuclear arsenal can bring.

The Iranians know exactly what the bomb would make them: the dominant regional power in the Middle East. Iran would become, in a stroke, more powerful than the Saudis, an even greater influence than it is today over a Shiite-controlled Iraq and, arguably, as powerful as Israel. And the better Iran's missile technology becomes, the greater its influence and ability to blackmail.

Bush administration officials who have reviewed the classified assessments of Iran's next moves worry that it would not even have to build a complete bomb to gain leverage. It would just have to make a credible case that it could assemble a weapon on short notice. "For their political needs, that would be enough," said Gary Samore, who was a nonproliferation official in the Clinton administration.

That explains why the Americans have been so adamant about not allowing Iran to conduct even experimental uranium-enrichment technology on its soil, even if it has a right to do so as a signer of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. It may also explain why the Iranians are so insistent that they will never give up that right.

The Iranians also know that history suggests they have a good chance of reaching their goal. This is not the first time the Americans have declared that another nation cannot be allowed to unlock the secrets of the atom — and then learned to live with the risk when it did.

In the mid-1960's, President Lyndon Johnson contemplated pre-emptive strikes against sites where China had nuclear installations. "Many today forget that Stalin's Soviet Union and Mao Zedong's China were seen as more threatening in both capabilities and intentions than are today's mullahs in Tehran," Richard K. Betts, a professor of political science at Columbia University, wrote in the most recent issue of *The National Interest*.

In both cases, though, what seemed at the time like a life-threatening menace morphed into a manageable threat — partly because containment worked, and partly because Soviet and Chinese leaders made shrewd assessments of their real strategic interests.

Both, however, are somewhat flawed comparisons: Iran is no superpower. The cases of Pakistan, India and North Korea may be more instructive.

When Pakistan and India set off tests and counter-tests in 1998, Washington tried to punish both. That effort didn't extend past 9/11. Mr. Bush needed both countries too much. Today Pakistan is a "major non-NATO ally" with a nuclear force that many in Washington still fear could fall into the wrong hands in the event of a coup. Last month, President Bush gave India the ultimate blessing, agreeing to seek an exemption from Congress that would allow the United States to sell India fuel for its civilian nuclear plants.

Even more to the point is the case of North Korea. As in the case of Iran, Mr. Bush has said the United States cannot "tolerate" North Korea as a nuclear power. But Washington is already tolerating exactly that. John Negroponte, the director of national intelligence, told Congress recently that intelligence officials assume that North Korea is telling

the truth when it boasts it has produced enough nuclear fuel for several weapons. But no one — least of all its closest neighbors, China and South Korea — dare push it to the brink. They have learned to live with the status quo. The Iranians are betting that this confrontation — what Graham Allison, a nuclear expert at Harvard, calls a "slow motion Cuban missile crisis" — has a good chance of coming out the same way. If so, the problem may go beyond Iran.

"Remember, Iran is just one instance of the problem, and in Iran's case, containment might work," says Brent Scowcroft, who was the national security adviser to Mr. Bush's father. "But if that happens, I think we are on the way to a world of proliferation like we have not seen before."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/19/weekinreview/19sanger.ART0.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

London Sunday Telegraph

March 19, 2006

Iran's Secret Talks With Iraqi Militants Spark Fears Of Proxy War

By Harry de Quetteville

Iran held secret talks with Shia militant leaders from Iraq and Lebanon only days before the country's nuclear negotiators threatened America with "harm and pain", independent sources in Teheran have revealed.

The Iraqi firebrand cleric, Moqtadr al-Sadr and the chief of the armed Shia group Hizbollah in Lebanon, Hassan Nasrallah, held separate consultations with leading officials in Teheran.

Al-Sadr commands thousands of fighters in Iraq, with the power to destabilise further the country and target British and American troops, while Hizbollah's missile-wielding fighters are stationed on Lebanon's southern border with Israel. The revelation of their visits to Teheran has stoked fears that Iran's Shia clerical rulers are drawing up plans to wage a co-ordinated proxy war, using foreign Shia militias, in the worsening dispute with the West over its nuclear ambitions.

In a statement 10 days ago to the International Atomic Energy Agency, Iran said that America could inflict harm and pain, before adding: "But the United States is also susceptible to harm and pain."

On Friday, Ali Larijani, a leading Iranian nuclear negotiator, said: "Iran has chosen the path of resistance till achieving full access to nuclear energy, because we consider it a legitimate right." Iran insists that its nuclear plans are for peaceful purposes, a claim disputed by the United States, which fears that Teheran is developing nuclear weapons.

The visits of al-Sadr and Nasrallah to the Iranian capital went unmentioned in state-controlled media, but were reported on the Iranian expatriate internet site, roozonline, widely regarded as a reliable source of information from inside the tightly controlled Iranian regime.

While Iraq and Lebanon are home to the most powerful Shia militias, the voice of Iran's ruling clerics also holds sway with Shia minorities and Iranian communities in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Its capacity to destabilise the Middle East also extends to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

*Iran's most prominent dissident journalist has been freed from jail after six years, much of which was spent in solitary confinement. Akbar Ganji was imprisoned in 2001 for investigating the murder of five dissidents by intelligence agents.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2006/03/19/wiran119.xml>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Times

March 19, 2006

Pg. 3

Smallpox Drill Tests Readiness

By Associated Press

Cabinet secretaries participated in a drill yesterday that simulated a smallpox attack as the government tested plans to counter the potential use of bioweapons by terrorists.

"The purpose of this exercise, which was only a drill, was to address the federal government's response to a potential smallpox attack," said Dana Perino, a White House spokeswoman. "While there's concern, we do not have any concern that a smallpox attack is imminent."

Officials from various government agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention director, Dr. Julie Gerberding, participated in the four-hour exercise to identify gaps in local and state preparedness plans and fine-tune the federal government's response.

Members of the Cabinet who participated were: Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, Health and Human Services Secretary Michael O. Leavitt, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns, Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta and Veterans Affairs Secretary Jim Nicholson.

President Bush, who was spending the weekend at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland, did not take part in the drill, conducted in a conference room at the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next to the White House.

The simulation yesterday was the second drill to check the nation's readiness for catastrophic attacks. Federal officials said that a similar rehearsal in December for pandemic flu showed that saving lives and containing economic damage would require more planning in local communities and production of more vaccines and medications.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060318-112958-5512r.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Honolulu Advertiser

March 18, 2006

Army Sees No Toxic Threat In Sea Dump

By Will Hoover, Advertiser Leeward O'ahu Writer

WAI'ANAE — A high-level Army official told people at a special meeting of the Wai'anae Neighborhood Board last night that thousands of tons of chemical munitions dumped at two locations off O'ahu during and immediately after World War II "do not currently pose an immediate threat to the health and safety" of the people of Hawai'i. The official also said the military does not think the munitions should be retrieved.

Tad Davis, the Army's deputy assistant secretary for the environment, apologized to the approximately 70 people at the gathering at Wai'anae District Park for the short notice in announcing he would be here, but said last night's little-publicized meeting was due to a recent change of his scheduling.

Davis said the purpose of the meeting was to update the community on what the military had learned during "months of exhaustive research" through more than a half-million pages of archival pages, and numerous military studies on the effects of seawater on the chemical munitions.

He also said the joint military operation wanted to work with the community and to encourage its input and suggestions as well as its support in locating individuals still living who may have firsthand knowledge of the munitions disposal that took place six decades ago.

Davis said the military had identified two locations where, he said, 2,600 tons of mustard, cyanogen chloride, hydrogen cyanide and lewisite were dumped between 1944 and 1946.

He said the chemical weapons were produced during World War II because opposing nations had made similar weapons and the military thought it needed a retaliatory capability if chemical weapons were used against U.S. forces first. Dumping the chemicals at selected sites in the ocean was considered the safest way to dispose of the weapons.

He said that 60 years ago, the limited options in disposing of such weapons were an open burn, which would introduce toxins into the atmosphere; burial in the ground, which would have presented an undesirable health hazard; or disposal "well offshore in deep water with the intent that no human being would ever come into contact with them ever again."

The locations

One such site, he said, was about 10 miles out to sea off Pearl Harbor in about 1,200 feet of water. Another site was about 10 miles off the Wai'anae Coast in about 6,000 feet of water. Davis said the military believes it may also have identified another disposal location about 5 miles out from Pearl Harbor, but more study needed to be done to confirm that.

Davis stressed that much more study and research need to be done and that last night's update was an interim report. But he said various studies of what occurs when the chemical munitions come in contact with seawater have concluded that such munitions are better off left alone.

Davis said the military has come to a preliminary conclusion that the weapons now pose little threat if left where they are and, in fact, could pose a greater safety hazard if people tried to retrieve them.

Instead, he said, the military wants to establish a system of surveying and monitoring the disposal sites on a continuing basis.

Residents' questions

During a question-and-answer period, residents expressed concerns about why the documentation of the disposals is so difficult to find. They asked when was the last time such weapons were dumped in Hawai'i.

"It has not been an easy process," David said of locating the documentation. "It's not as easy as going down to the National Archives and opening the drawer marked 'C' for chemical munitions."

Part of the difficulty has been locating the numerous places the information might be stored.

He said that as far as the military can determine, the last time chemical munitions were disposed in Hawaiian waters was in 1946.

When a woman asked how the disposed chemical munitions may have affected the health of people in Hawai'i over the past 60 years, Davis said the information could be determined by the results of the site surveys.

Davis said a final initial report should be completed around June, and it would be followed by recommendations that would include such things as additional seawater analysis and surveying.

Board chairwomen Cynthia Rezentes said she had heard both optimism and skepticism from the community at large about what the military intends to do about the chemical weapons disposal.

"We'll just have to wait and see what happens," she said.

More than one person at the meeting thanked Davis and his staff for their candor in outlining the problem and what can be done about it. But others were less impressed.

"It's disappointing that the military is unwilling to make a commitment to do a cleanup," said Marti Townsend, a staff employee with Kahea, the Hawaiian Environmental Alliance. "He said their policy right now is not to retrieve these chemical weapons. I'm really concerned about the saturation level of the ocean."

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2006/Mar/18/In/FP603180338.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

March 20, 2006

Documents Link Saddam, Weapons Banned Since '20s

One details plan for mustard-gas attack on Kurds

By Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Saddam Hussein ordered plans drawn up for a chemical weapons attack on Kurdish guerrilla bases in northern Iraq in 1987, according to a letter signed by his personal secretary that is among documents recently declassified by the U.S. military.

The documents — a series of memos between Saddam's office, the military intelligence service and the army chief of staff found by U.S. troops in Iraq — do not say whether the attack was carried out.

But a doctor who traveled with Kurdish troops at the time says some of them were injured in a mustard gas attack 10 days after the last memo.

The disclosure, as Saddam's trial on unrelated murder and torture charges is under way, could shed new light on the killings of Kurds that the former Iraqi leader might be tried for in the future.

Although Saddam has long been blamed for chemical attacks known to have been conducted by Iraq's military during the 1980-88 war with Iran, the memos are some of the first documents to be made public that appear to directly link Saddam to the use of such arms, which have been banned by international treaty since the 1920s.

180,000 Kurds killed

President Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq after citing, among other reasons, charges that Saddam's regime was hiding weapons of mass destruction, but no such weapons were found after his ouster in April 2003.

The memos are among hundreds of documents gathered by the U.S. military since the invasion of Iraq that are now being declassified. The U.S. military cautioned on its Web site that the government "has made no determination regarding the authenticity of the documents, validity or factual accuracy of the information contained therein."

The planned attack outlined in the documents appears to have been part of the 1987-88 Anfal campaign that killed more than 180,000 Kurds and demolished hundreds of Kurdish villages in northern Iraq. In the most notorious attack, Saddam's army bombed the town of Halabja with mustard and nerve gas on March 16, 1988, killing an estimated 5,000 people.

The memos date to about a year before the Halabja attack and concern an area about 120 miles to the northwest. A March 11, 1987, report from Iraq's military intelligence chief outlined a number of bases for Kurdish rebels and Iranian troops in the area.

"Special ammunition" attack

Saddam's office responded with a March 12 letter signed by his personal secretary, saying, "The leader Mr.

President has ordered that your department study with experts a surprise attack with special ammunition in the areas of Barzani's gangs and the Khomeini Guards."

"Special ammunition" is the phrase used throughout Saddam's regime for chemical weapons. Later documents in the series of memos mention specifically the nerve agent sarin and mustard gas.

Then in a March 31 letter, the intelligence chief recommended two alternative targets: Kurdish guerrilla bases near the towns of Balisian and Qaradagh.

It recommended using two-thirds of Iraq's stores of sarin and a third of the stores of mustard gas and said the attack could be done by mid-April.

According to the Washington-based Henry L. Stimson Center think tank, there were two documented Iraqi chemical weapons attacks in 1987. One was in April in Basra, killing or wounding 5,000 Iranian soldiers. The other was in October in Wassit, killing or wounding 3,000 Iranians.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/sn/attack/120816.php>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 20, 2006

Pg. 9

Top U.N. Members To Try To Break Stalemate On Iran

By Colum Lynch, Washington Post Staff Writer

UNITED NATIONS, March 19 -- The Security Council's five permanent members and Germany will hold a high-level meeting Monday in New York to try to break an impasse over the international response to the Iranian nuclear crisis.

The meeting comes as U.S. and European diplomats have failed during two weeks of negotiations to overcome Chinese and Russian objections to a Security Council statement demanding that Iran stop its nuclear-enrichment activities and cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency. R. Nicholas Burns, the undersecretary of state for political affairs, and top foreign affairs officials from the five other governments are expected to attend. U.S. and European officials say they will try to assuage Russian and Chinese fears that the adoption of the statement will inevitably lead to harsh punitive measures against Iran. "We're not hellbent on going to war; we're not hellbent on imposing sanctions," said a senior State Department official familiar with the discussions, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the talks are supposed to be confidential. "We're hellbent on having the Iranians return to the negotiations, like the Russians and the Chinese want."

Moscow's opposition to a Security Council declaration has hardened in recent weeks as senior U.S. officials, including Burns, have publicly threatened to press for targeted sanctions against Iran's rulers if they ignore the 15-nation council's call for a freeze on Iran's uranium-enrichment activities.

Russian diplomats say they are concerned that a U.S.-backed European draft, which sets a two-week deadline for Tehran to stop enrichment activities and agree to more intrusive U.N. inspections, provides too little time to test Iran's cooperation. Russia's U.N. ambassador, Andrei Denisov, mockingly told the Associated Press on Friday: "Let's just imagine that we adopt it and today we issued that statement -- then what happens after two weeks? In such a pace, we'll start bombing in June."

Monday's meeting, which will be held at the British mission, was scheduled in response to a request by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to hold talks outside the Security Council to map out the United Nations' long-term strategy for persuading Iran to scale back its nuclear activities.

An evening meeting, which will include the U.N. ambassadors for the six governments, will focus on reaching a deal on the presidential statement.

A second senior Bush administration official, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, denied an AP report Saturday suggesting that Britain was considering proposing Monday to resolve the standoff through talks among the council's five veto-wielding members, Germany and Iran. "The report is absolutely false," the U.S. official said. "We checked with the Brits, and they were stupefied by that report, and they never heard of it. No one has made that proposal, and we wouldn't accept it."

The standoff hinges on whether the Iran crisis should be handled by the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency or the Security Council, which can impose sanctions or use force. Russia and China have insisted that the IAEA take the lead, while the United States, France and Britain say that Iran will stop its activities only if faced with the threat of sanctions.

Some council members say the European proposal for a two-week deadline for IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei to report to the council on Iran's cooperation is too short. China prefers four to six weeks. Russia opposes any report until the IAEA meets in June.

China said Friday that it would accept a continuing role for the U.N. council in managing the nuclear crisis. U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya said he had offered a compromise to bridge the gap between Russia and the council's

three major Western powers. Under the plan, ElBaradei would report on Iran to the 35-member IAEA board and the Security Council.

U.S., French and British diplomats say they have rallied a majority of the council's 15 members in support of a draft statement that would call on Iran to stop uranium-enrichment activities and cooperate with the IAEA. They will resume talks on Tuesday.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/19/AR2006031900796.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 20, 2006

Pg. 9

Tehran Courts Support Of Arabs

Officials Seek Alliances, Backing for Nuclear Program

By Daniel Williams, Washington Post Foreign Service

CAIRO -- Iran has embarked on a charm offensive in the Arab world aimed at expanding economic and political ties and circumventing efforts by the United States and its allies to isolate Iran over its nuclear program.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad traveled this month to Kuwait, the first visit there by a high-ranking Iranian official in more than 25 years. Other Iranian officials toured Persian Gulf states trying to persuade them to endorse Iran's desire to develop nuclear technology, which U.S. officials have called a cover for building weapons. In mid-February, Iran's deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, Mohammad-Reza Baqeri, met in Mecca with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal in a bid to persuade the Saudis to coordinate stands on regional issues, according to reports from Tehran.

Iran also moved to shore up its longtime alliance with Syria, itself a target of U.S.-led isolation efforts. Iran and Syria signed preferential trade agreements and announced plans to lay an oil pipeline between the two countries, although a key section would have to pass through Iraq. During a recent meeting with Iranian officials in Damascus, Syrian Prime Minister Naji al-Otri publicly endorsed Iran's assertion of the right to develop nuclear technology, albeit for "peaceful purposes."

Across the Mediterranean, in Tunisia, officials pledged to increase trade, flights and tourism ties with Tehran.

The activity coincides with Iran's stated support for Hamas, formally known as the Islamic Resistance Movement, which won a majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament in January. Ahmadinejad has offered to fill gaps in the Palestinian Authority budget created by a withdrawal of international aid as Hamas takes over. The United States and many European governments consider Hamas a terrorist organization and have said it ought to be isolated until it recognizes Israel and forswears violence.

Arab observers say Iran's diplomatic offensive represents a newly vigorous approach to improving relations with its neighbors. "Iran is trying to become a player in the region. At least toward the Arabs, Iran is trying to moderate its tone," said Maha Altorki, an Iran analyst in the Asia section of the Arab League, based in Cairo, the Egyptian capital.

Altorki said Iran faces numerous obstacles in its campaign. Persian Gulf states closely allied with the United States are leery. Iran has laid claims to islands and undersea territory in the oil-rich gulf. During a meeting of Persian Gulf foreign ministers this month, Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates, pointed out that Iran continues to occupy islands claimed by the UAE and called for their peaceful return.

Iran also faces suspicions about its long-term intentions. It is a majority Shiite Muslim country ruled under Islamic law as Iranian clerics define it, and that makes leaders of the predominantly Sunni Muslim Arab world wary that the Iranians will try to subvert their rule. Last year, Jordan's King Abdullah warned of an emerging "Shiite crescent" stretching from Iran through Iraq and Syria into Lebanon, where Iran has long been a patron of the Hezbollah movement that fought the Israeli army.

Abdullah and Middle East observers have noted that the Bush administration boosted Iran's regional profile by toppling Saddam Hussein and effectively shifting power to Iraqi Shiite parties and militias that Tehran had hosted while they were in exile.

"I have a real problem with certain Iranian factions' political influence inside Iraq," Abdullah said in a published interview last year. "My concern is political, not religious -- revolving around Iran, Iran's political involvement inside Iraq, its relation with Syria and Hezbollah and the strengthening of this political-strategic alliance. This would create a scenario where you have these four -- Iran, Iran-influenced Iraq, Syria and Hezbollah -- [with] a strategic objective that could create a major conflict."

Not all Arab countries share such alarm, cautioned Wael al-Assad, director of the Arab League's Department of Multilateral Relations. "There is no single position in the Arab world toward Iran. In general, the closer a country is

to Iran, the more worried it is," he said. "Of course, the collapse of Iraq and the rise of the Shiites make the situation more frightening to some."

The Arabs' position on Iran's nuclear program is complicated by their demand that the region should be free of nuclear weapons -- including Israel, which has long possessed a nuclear arsenal but never acknowledged it.

"We don't want Iran to have nuclear weapons. The difference with the U.S. approach is that we see it as a regional issue," Assad said. "We want a nuclear-free zone. We declare it is wrong for any country in the area to possess nuclear weapons. Otherwise there will be an arms race. The Americans handle it on a state-by-state basis."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/19/AR2006031900926.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

March 21, 2006

'US Could Wipe Out Iran Nukes In 2 Days'

By Yigal Grayeff, The Jerusalem Post

Another voice has been added to those who believe that air strikes should halt Iran's quest to develop nuclear weapons.

Gary Berntsen, the former senior CIA operative who led the search for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan in late 2001, believes the United States has the ability to easily destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. He said the US could use bunker-buster bombs and other weapons to carry out the operation.

"We can dig those things out. We can destroy them," he told *The Jerusalem Post* in an interview.

"We can take care of it in a couple of days with air strikes and they wouldn't be able to stop us," he added. "It wouldn't be difficult to plan. They'd be some dangers but I think the United States can do it." Berntsen, who left the CIA in June last year after more than 20 years of service, believes it will be difficult to persuade Iran to stop its nuclear program.

"I know the Iranians. I've worked against the Iranians for years. They are determined to get this no matter what, and they will lie and cheat and do whatever they have to do to get themselves a weapon," he said.

Berntsen ruled out covert action because of the scale of Iran's nuclear program.

"This is a huge system of facilities they have. This is not going to be a small sort of engagement. We are probably going to have to destroy 30 facilities in 30 locations. Or at least 15," he said.

Berntsen's comments came after former Pentagon adviser Richard Perle said earlier this month that Iran's prime nuclear facilities could be devastated in one night by a small fleet of US B-2 bombers.

In addition, Moshe Ya'alon, Israel's former chief of General Staff, said the IDF has the capabilities to attack Iran's nuclear facilities and could do it in conjunction with the US and some EU countries. However, Berntsen believes Israel should not carry out any operation.

"It's better for the United States to do it. If you (Israel) do it, we'll have all sorts of problems in the Middle East, all sorts of countries that will align themselves with the Iranians over this. Politically it makes more sense for the US to do it," he said.

Berntsen also ruled out a ground operation.

"This is huge country. There are 70 million people there. It's gigantic. We don't need to be getting into something like that," he said.

However, Berntsen believes that the US should first exhaust all the political options before carrying out a strike.

"We should do what we're doing right now. That means taking them to the United Nations and make this 'the world against Iran,' because the Iranians appear determined to create a weapon," he said.

"If by chance they disarm, then we can avoid this, but if they don't disarm we will need to take care of this ourselves," he said.

"The Iranians have to know that we mean business. They will either disarm or we will destroy their facilities. No ifs, ands, or buts. They present a threat to peace in the Middle East. They present a threat to Israel. We cannot accept that," he added.

Berntsen predicted that if Iran doesn't disarm, President George Bush would carry out an attack regardless of domestic opposition.

"I think that President Bush has demonstrated that he says what he means and he means what he says. A lot of people didn't think he would do Iraq. This is a guy who doesn't put his finger in the air to see which way the wind is blowing. President Bush means business.

"The problem right now is that the Iranians are going to miscalculate. They are going to believe that because 2006 is an election year (in Congress), and due to all this political opposition to the president because of Iraq, they're going to think that he's weak in the knees, he can't do it and they're not going to negotiate.

"That would be a very serious mistake for them. They're going to miscalculate. They think he's politically weak and George Bush won't care. He's going to do it anyway when it comes down to it," Berntsen said.
"I believe that we'll get past the mid-term election in 2006 and then the Iranians ought to disarm themselves or suffer the consequences," he added.

Berntsen recently released a book called *Jawbreaker*, which is about the search for bin Laden after al-Qaida's attacks on the US in September 2001. The book has been on the best-seller lists in the US but has yet to be released in Israel.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1139395642558&pagename=JPost%2FJPostArticle%2FShowFull>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

March 21, 2006

Director Says Missile Defense Has 'Turned Corner'

By Reuters

WASHINGTON — U.S. efforts to develop a layered defense against enemy missiles have "turned a major corner" and three tough tests of the system are planned this year, the Pentagon's missile defense chief said Monday. Missile Defense Agency Director Lt. Gen. Henry Obering said the missile shield could already thwart enemy missile attacks, given a finite, but not impractical amount of time to prepare, and more interceptors and radars would be added this year.

"We will always be continually assessing our capabilities and if we need to make adjustments we'll do so," he told reporters after a conference. "I am confident that if we had to use the system, the system would work."

He said recent news about nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea underscored the need for a U.S. missile defense, and even U.S. allies that had been skeptical in the past were becoming more supportive.

Obering said the agency had revamped its testing procedures and improved quality control after the interceptor failed to launch in two tests in late 2004 and early 2005, but turned up no "showstoppers" or reasons to halt the program.

"Based on the testing that we have done in this past year, we had some tremendous successes that I see as a portent of the future," he said. "That's not to say that we may not have setbacks in the future, but I do think that we turned a major corner this year."

The White House asked Congress for \$9.3 billion in funding for the Missile Defense Agency in fiscal 2007, up from \$7.8 billion in fiscal 2006, including an increase of \$1.6 billion to field more interceptor missiles at sea at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

He said a decision to declare the developmental program fully operational was "way above his pay grade," but he favored a realistic approach aimed at avoiding inflated expectations of the system's capability. The U.S.

administration had initially hoped to declare the system operational in 2004.

Obering said the agency planned three more operationally realistic tests of the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense System this year, including up to two tests to see if U.S. defenses could intercept a simulated enemy missile.

The last successful intercept took place in October 2002.

The agency expects to make a decision by the fall about where to build a European interceptor site, he said, noting that discussions were under way with several countries.

The fiscal 2007 budget request includes \$119 million to start buying items that would be needed for the site, planned to become operational around 2010 to 2011.

Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland have said they are in discussions with the United States about the site.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/news/121010>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

March 21, 2006

Pg. 9

Nunn Urges Congress To Set Conditions On U.S.-India Nuclear Pact

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

In a setback for the administration's efforts to win approval of a landmark nuclear pact with India, former senator Sam Nunn said yesterday that he has serious concerns the deal would harm the "United States' vital interest" in preventing nuclear proliferation and urged Congress to set conditions for its support.

"Congress has a duty to look at the broader framework," Nunn, a moderate and highly respected Georgia Democrat who still has broad influence in both parties on proliferation and military matters, said in an interview. "If I were still in Congress, I would be skeptical and looking at conditions that could be attached."

Undersecretary of State R. Nicholas Burns warned lawmakers last week that congressionally mandated conditions could cause the agreement to unravel. He and other administration officials say the agreement is a groundbreaking achievement that will bring India, which has not signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, into the nonproliferation mainstream, while bolstering U.S.-India ties and adding jobs to the U.S. economy.

But Nunn, who was briefed on the deal by State Department officials last week, said he is concerned it would lead to the spread of weapons-grade nuclear material, unleash a regional arms race with China and Pakistan, and make it more difficult for the United States to win support for sanctions against nuclear renegades such as Iran and North Korea. Nunn is a board member of General Electric Co. -- which built nuclear power reactors in India before New Delhi conducted its first nuclear test in 1974 -- but he said he thinks the economic benefits are overstated.

The administration last week proposed legislation that would exempt India from sections of the Atomic Energy Act that restrict trade with countries that are not party to nuclear treaties. The proposal already faces an uphill battle in Congress, where key lawmakers such as Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Rep. Henry J. Hyde (R-Ill.), chairman of the House International Relations Committee, have remained neutral. The administration has actively sought, without much success, the support of moderate opinion leaders such as Nunn.

Under the pact, India is to separate its civilian and military nuclear programs over the next eight years to gain U.S. expertise and nuclear fuel to meet its rapidly rising energy needs. India's civilian facilities would be subject for the first time to permanent international inspections, but the agreement does not require oversight of India's prototype fast-breeder reactors, which can produce significant amounts of weapons-grade plutonium when fully operational. The Bush administration originally sought a plan that would have allowed India to continue producing material for six to 10 weapons each year, but the new plan would allow India enough fissile material for as many as 50 weapons a year. Experts said this would far exceed what is believed to be its current capacity.

Nunn said that among the conditions he would attach to the legislation is the requirement it could not take effect until the president certifies that India pledges not to produce nuclear materials, such as plutonium or highly enriched uranium, for weapons. The current agreement "certainly does not curb in any way the proliferation of weapons-grade nuclear material," Nunn said.

"India was a lot better negotiator than we were," Nunn asserted. While the administration has said it has no intention of aiding India's nuclear weapons program, "the reality could be the opposite," he said. "The administration has a high burden to explain this."

Nunn added that suggestions by some former and current administration officials that it might be in the United States' interest to allow India to build up its strategic capabilities is "totally counterproductive and dangerous reasoning."

Nunn, who served in the Senate for 24 years, is co-chairman and chief executive of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonprofit organization that seeks to reduce the global threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Lugar is also a board member of NTI, and the two men wrote the Nunn-Lugar Act, which has helped destroy thousands of nuclear warheads in the former Soviet Union.

In an interview published yesterday in the Indianapolis Star, Lugar said he might favor the legislation if he were convinced that the new relationship was in the United States' best interests, that there were "considerable if not complete" safeguards on the spread of nuclear fuel and that it would lead to a reduction of oil consumption.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has vowed an all-out push to win approval of the agreement, saying it would be a boon for U.S. business. But it has also sparked a backlash from nonproliferation experts who believe it will lead to the unraveling of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which sought to limit the number of nuclear weapons states.

"Nunn's voice carries weight," said Henry D. Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center and a Pentagon official in the George H.W. Bush administration, who opposes the agreement. "We have waited for a moderate, respected voice to speak clear sense on these matters. Now that he's spoken, it would be very strange if Congress doesn't listen."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/20/AR2006032001681.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Houston Chronicle

March 21, 2006

Pakistan

Cruise Missile Test-Fired By Army

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan today successfully test-fired a cruise missile that can carry a nuclear warhead and hit targets within a 310-mile range, the army said. The firing took place at an undisclosed location inside Pakistan and was the second test of the Hatf VII cruise missile, an army statement said. Pakistan's nuclear-armed neighbor India was not given prior notice of the test as it did not fall under an accord that covers notification of ballistic missile tests, a senior official said.

<http://www.chron.com/dispatch/story.mpl/world/3737106.html>

New York Times

March 21, 2006

Speaking To Tehran, With One Voice

By Jessica T. Mathews

Washington--WITH the Iranian nuclear crisis about to land in the Security Council, the events that led up to the war in Iraq point clearly to what needs to be done.

In the decade preceding the Iraq war, Mr. Hussein was able to defy the major powers when they were divided.

Exploiting his advantage as a single actor and Washington's indecision over whether it most wanted nonproliferation or regime change, Mr. Hussein consistently outmaneuvered his diplomatic opponents.

But he also knew that he could not buck the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council when they were serious and united (as, for example, during the toughened United Nations inspections in the months just before the war), and he did not even try.

The situation with Iran today is the same. Washington cannot decide whether the top priority of its Iran policy should be regime change or nonproliferation; as a result, others of the major powers do not trust and will not fully support its antinuclear efforts. Tehran has easily exploited this lack of unity among the major powers to frustrate every attempt to rein in its nuclear program. It has recruited international support through energetic diplomacy to the group of developing countries known as the G-77. Just as Mr. Hussein did, the leaders in Tehran have made diplomatic mincemeat of the big powers.

Iran has been so successful in this that some experts in the West have turned defeatist. Their view is mistaken. The idea that "it's too late" to stop Iran's progress toward building nuclear weapons is technologically wrong. "There's nothing we can do about it" ignores a range of options between economic sanctions, going to war and more of doing nothing. And the argument that "we can learn to live with it" misses the nature of the challenge.

A nuclear Iran is dangerous enough, but this crisis is only proximately about Iran. More important, it is about the likely consequence of an Iranian bomb, namely, that Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt would produce their own bombs, and, thanks to the concomitant international failure to deal with North Korea, the nonproliferation regime would collapse. What is at stake is not a choice between 9 and 10 nuclear weapons states, but a choice between 9 and 30 or more.

The major powers may yet be able to unite to stop Iran at this late hour, but not without a decisive change in American policy. Washington's choice is simple: does it want to stop Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons badly enough to deal with Iran's present government?

Like the Clinton administration with Iraq, the Bush administration has been unable to make up its mind, locking its policy into a cycle of self-defeating half-steps. The combination of "axis of evil" threats, partial support of European negotiations and publicly announced financial backing for the opposition in Iran ensures only that we will fail either to negotiate an end to the nuclear program or to overthrow the present regime.

The administration must, finally, hold its nose and recognize that the nuclear challenge is the indisputable priority. It must get off the sidelines and into negotiations with Tehran. It must solidify agreement among its fellow permanent council members by working closely with Russia, not least by concluding a long overdue pact on civil nuclear cooperation. Russian participation would make it possible to provide Iran with a credible international guarantee of uranium enrichment and reprocessing services.

With China and the others, the United States needs to make clear that the Security Council can resort to other steps besides economic sanctions to significantly raise the cost to Tehran of its continued defiance, beginning with making International Atomic Energy Agency inspections mandatory rather than voluntary.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (and her fellow foreign ministers from the council's permanent members) should be flying to Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa and other leading countries of the G-77 to explain why Iran is wrong to claim that the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty gives it the "right" to enrich uranium, and why Iran's abuse of the treaty devalues each of their commitments to give up nuclear weapons.

Given the American record with Iraq and Iran, others will be skeptical that Washington has made a clear choice for nonproliferation and away from regime change. The message will have to be steady and unequivocal. If President Bush and Secretary Rice continue to say one thing and Vice President Dick Cheney and our ambassador to the United Nations, John R. Bolton, say another, the effort will quickly fail.

Members of Congress have a direct responsibility as well. Only they — especially the Democrats — can make such a policy change possible. They will have to forgo the indulgence of slamming the administration from the right and currying favor with pro-Israel voters by vying to see who can be the most anti-Iranian.

All of this, and more, is what serious anti-nuclear diplomacy would look like. It has not yet been tried. Anyone who promotes the use of military force from the present position of American indecision and before the obvious political steps have been taken is repeating the error that led us into Iraq.

The international community's record on Iran's nuclear program (as on North Korea's) has been feckless. Only the United States can change that. If we fail to pursue this effort with unwavering, clear-minded diplomacy, a nuclear-armed world will be the Bush administration's chief legacy, no matter how the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism turn out.

Jessica T. Mathews is the president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/21/opinion/21mathews.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

USA Today

Washington/Politics

Posted 3/20/2006 7:16 PM Updated 3/21/2006 11:36 AM

Chertoff: Chemical plants must beef up security

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff called for government regulation of chemical plant security on Tuesday but said the industry should come up with its own protective measures, to be verified by private auditors.

Speaking at a forum hosted by the chemical industry, Chertoff said Congress needs to quickly give his department regulatory authority to bolster facilities that are attractive targets for terrorists. But he said federal regulations must be flexible to prevent harsh burdens on business.

"We ought to say to the industry, 'Look, here's where we need to go,'" Chertoff said. "Now, there are a lot of different roads to get there. And you can choose the road that best fits your particular kind of chemical, or your particular type of operation. We're not going to micromanage. What we do insist, though, is that you get to the place you need to be."

Chertoff said he envisioned performance standards, set by the Homeland Security Department, for chemical companies to follow. Those standards would not require specific safeguards, such as gates and guards, but would force the industry to develop adequate security plans at all manufacturing and storage facilities.

Those standards could be validated by private auditors contracted with Homeland Security, Chertoff said.

Congress is considering legislation for federal regulation of the nation's 15,000 privately operated chemical facilities, which counterterrorism experts have warned are at the top of the list of likely terror targets. Congressional investigators have revealed spotty results in how well the chemical industry is prepared to respond in the event of an attack.

The leading bill, by Sens. Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn., would give Homeland Security authority to shut down plants that fail to submit acceptable security plans.

Large chemical corporations quickly applauded Chertoff's plans, which were mostly aimed at small firms that have resisted installing security because of high costs.

"What we're doing at Dow falls very much in line with what the secretary was talking about," said Tim Scott, chief security officer at Dow Chemical. "We approach security from a risk management perspective, and we try to identify the right level of risk and the right approach to reduce that risk at all of our sites."

Chertoff said he did not think any regulation should require the chemical industry to use certain kinds of substances that would be less dangerous to the public in an attack or accidental release, as environmentalists have demanded.

"We have to be careful not to move from what is a security-based focus, as far as the type of regulation I'm describing, into one that tries to broaden into achieving environmental ends that are unrelated to security," he said.

But with one-fifth of the nation's chemical plants located close to cities and other heavily populated areas, "there isn't any security that would be good enough" against the threat of a hazardous toxic release, said Greenpeace legislative director Rick Hind said Monday. "A small plane or a high powered weapon would bypass any gate or fence."

http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2006-03-20-chemical-security_x.htm

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)