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New York Times
March 22, 2006

Iraqi Official, Paid By C.I.A., Gave Account Of Weapons

By Scott Shane

WASHINGTON, March 21 — Saddam Hussein's foreign minister was paid for information he supplied to the Central Intelligence Agency, through the French intelligence agency, that raised questions about the scale of Iraq's weapons programs, former intelligence officials said Tuesday.

The role of Naji Sabri, Iraq's foreign minister from 2001 until the America-led invasion began in 2003, was first described publicly in a 2004 speech by George J. Tenet, the former director of central intelligence, but Mr. Tenet did not give the Iraqi's name.

NBC News reported on Monday night that Mr. Sabri had been the man Mr. Tenet described as "a source who had direct access to Saddam and his inner circle," and two former intelligence officials confirmed the identification. Mr. Sabri did not meet directly with C.I.A. officers, but spoke with intermediaries in meetings arranged by the French intelligence agency, which passed the information on, the officials said.

One official said Mr. Sabri may not have known for certain that his information was going to the United States government or that the money he received — reported by NBC as more than \$100,000 — came from the C.I.A.

The officials were granted anonymity because of the importance of the secret intelligence relationship they had described. Mr. Sabri, who is teaching at a university in the Middle East outside Iraq, declined to discuss the report, NBC reported. A C.I.A. spokesman declined to comment Tuesday.

According to Mr. Tenet's account, which is generally in accord with that of NBC and the former intelligence officials, the source now identified as Mr. Sabri gave a mixed account of Iraq's weapons programs when he spoke with French intelligence officers in the fall of 2002.

Mr. Tenet said in his speech, at Georgetown University in February 2004, that a source who had direct access to Mr. Hussein had said that Iraq had no nuclear weapons but was "aggressively and covertly" seeking to develop them. Mr. Tenet said the source had also reported that the Hussein government was "dabbling" with biological weapons but had no "real weapons program."

By comparison, an October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate, representing the views of American intelligence agencies, said Iraq had "reconstituted its nuclear weapons program" and it had an active biological weapons program that had produced some germ weapons.

On chemical arms, Mr. Sabri's information seems to be closer to the American estimate, which had said Iraq was producing and stockpiling chemical weapons. Mr. Sabri told French intelligence officers that Iraq had stockpiled chemical weapons and might use them against invading troops or Israel, according to Mr. Tenet.

Extensive searches by American troops and weapons specialists after the fall of Mr. Hussein found no unconventional weapons of any kind.

A worldly diplomat and former editor of an English-language Iraqi newspaper, Mr. Sabri was recalled from the Iraqi Embassy in London in 1980 after his two brothers were arrested by Mr. Hussein's agents and jailed on conspiracy charges. They were tortured, and one died in prison, while the other was freed after six years, according to a biography of Mr. Sabri compiled by the BBC.

Mr. Sabri lived quietly as an editor and literary translator for a decade before being given a new government post at the time of the Persian Gulf war in 1991. He worked at the Ministry of Information, as an adviser to Mr. Hussein and as ambassador to Austria before becoming foreign minister in April 2001.

In September 2002, in a speech to the United Nations, Mr. Sabri declared that "Iraq is free of all nuclear, chemical and biological weapons."

The Bush administration has been accused by some former officials and members of Congress of deliberately skewing prewar intelligence to make the case for war.

Last month, Paul R. Pillar, a former C.I.A. official who oversaw intelligence assessments on the Middle East before the war, charged in an article in Foreign Affairs that "intelligence was misused publicly to justify decisions that had already been made."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/22/politics/22intel.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Christian Science Monitor

March 22, 2006

Pg. 2

Guard's Balancing Act: Should It Change?

A year-long commission will look at the force's increasing responsibilities, abroad and at home.

By Mark Sappenfield, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON -- The increasing demands on the Army National Guard appear at last to be moving both Congress and the Guard toward tough decisions about the future of the force.

For the Guard, the past 12 months have been something of a worst-case scenario dreamed up by the most diabolical of Pentagon planners. Buffeted first by the war in Iraq and then by the relief effort for hurricane Katrina, the Guard has had to manage perhaps the two most ambitious operations in its long history, which dates back 369 years to the days of breeches and powdered wigs.

It has been a trial by fire for a force that has changed dramatically in recent years. No longer is the Guard kept far from battle, as it was during the cold war. Nor is its mandate of emergency response secondary in post-9/11 America.

Yet amid last year's repeated deployments to Iraq and the Gulf Coast arose a question that is only now being fully addressed: How can the Guard strike a balance between its foreign and domestic missions without overburdening its citizen-soldiers?

"Katrina and Iraq created real pressure to look at the Guard - how we're resourcing it and how we're managing it - and whether there's a better way," says Michele Flournoy, an analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies here.

This month, Congress convened a year-long commission to look at those issues - from rotation schedules to budget figures. But perhaps more important, say experts, is the need to find a voice for the National Guard in the Pentagon, where it has long been seen as something of a kid brother - making do with all the Army's hand-me-downs and taking the biggest hits at budget time.

The past year has shown more clearly than any PowerPoint presentation that the Army National Guard is becoming a more integral and active part of the nation's security. That has created new stresses.

Though the fall of the Soviet Union has led to lower military spending and a smaller force, the military has actually been used increasingly often - in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. The way to do more with a smaller Army is to use all of it, including the Guard and Reserve, the Pentagon has decided.

In contrast to the cold war, when the National Guard was held away from the fight as a hedge against catastrophe, today's "total force" concept calls on the Guard and Reserves to fill the gaps of a smaller military. So they have in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But the Guard and Reserve are intended to be places for part-time soldiers who have separate lives as principals, bankers, and contractors. As the military leans more heavily on its reserve elements, it threatens to overwork its citizen-soldiers and undermine the very notion of a "reserve."

Moreover, the Guard is presented with the unique challenges of its dual mission. Guard units are controlled both by their governor and by the president of the United States. In the past, when the Guard stayed at home as a strategic reserve, governors could turn to them whenever they needed troops for disaster relief or security.

Now, President Bush wants the Guard to take a more active role overseas. Meanwhile, governors want the Guard to focus more on its homeland-security role. The question of who is in control has become a federal-state fault line.

"The balance of power between federal and state is a very difficult issue," says Arnold Punaro, chair of the congressional commission.

In many respects, the answer to all these problems lies in one solution: predictability. The goal is to deploy Guard members for federal missions once every six years on a clear rotation schedule.

"It makes things easier for families, and it makes things easier for governors because they know [what to expect] if you have predictability," says John Goheen of the National Guard Association of the United States, an advocacy group in Washington.

The deeper issue is changing the perception of the Guard within the Pentagon. During the cold war, the thinking went like this: As the troops of last resort, the Guard will always be the last force into battle. Therefore, their needs are the least pressing. The result was that the Guard was chronically underfunded and received the active Army's leftovers.

In today's total force, however, the Guard can be on the front lines from the very beginning, making their needs almost as great as those of the active Army. "The Guard is undergoing some fundamental changes in mission, but the systems under which we operate haven't undergone the same changes," says Gen. Roger Lempke, president of the Adjutants General Association of the United States, a group of the commanding officers of the country's National Guards.

Oftentimes, money and equipment earmarked for the Guard will never arrive. When the Pentagon said last month that it was planning to pay for only 333,000 Guard troops - not the 350,000 funded by Congress - Guard leaders said they had not been consulted about the decision. Congress and the Pentagon recently agreed on the full funding, if the Guard recruits the full number of troops.

Some also hope that the congressional commission can help the Guard find a high chair at the Pentagon table.

"Every time we get into tough budget choices, the Guard gets left out of the process," says Mr. Goheen. "The Guard is needing more of a voice."

The commission's report, including recommendations, will be submitted to Congress and the Defense secretary next March.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0322/p02s01-usmi.html>

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Los Angeles Times

March 22, 2006

Iranian Leader Reaffirms Offer Of Talks

Khamenei's agreement to discuss Iraq comes as unexpectedly rapid progress is reported in Tehran's uranium enrichment program.

By Alissa J. Rubin, Times Staff Writer

VIENNA — Iran pushed ahead on its nuclear program Tuesday as the country's most powerful figure reaffirmed its willingness to hold face-to-face talks with the United States on Iraq — sending a somewhat mixed message to the international community.

Talks at the United Nations Security Council about a response to Iran's nuclear program remained stalled as diplomats from Russia and China argued with representatives of the European Union and the United States over how hard to press Iran to halt its efforts to start uranium enrichment.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the ultimate say in Tehran on all state matters, said Iran was prepared to discuss ways to stabilize Iraq with an American delegation.

"If the Iranian officials can make the U.S. understand some issues about Iraq, there is no problem with the negotiations," Khamenei said in a speech broadcast on state television.

But he went on to warn the United States that Iran should be treated with the respect appropriate to one of the most powerful countries in the region. "If the talks mean opening a venue for bullying and imposition by the deceitful party [the Americans], then it will be forbidden," Khamenei said.

His comments came as President Bush warned that "if the Iranians were to have a nuclear weapon, they could blackmail the world" because "they're not welcoming the international inspections."

Meanwhile, diplomats close to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna confirmed that Iran had assembled 164 centrifuges — enough to combine into what engineers call a cascade, which can be used to spin uranium hexafluoride gas into enriched uranium.

That step would put Iran back at the level of technology it had achieved before it agreed to a moratorium on nuclear development in 2003. Nuclear experts believe that some of its equipment deteriorated during the moratorium.

Iran has yet to complete the piping system needed to move uranium gas from one centrifuge to the next. Until the system is finished and sealed, enrichment cannot begin. Experts disagreed over how long those next steps could take.

"This is the next rung on the technical ladder," said David Albright, a former weapons inspector who is president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington.

A U.S. diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Iran's move was "more rapid progress than we expected."

When enriched to a relatively low level, uranium can be used to fuel a reactor to generate electricity.

At higher levels of enrichment, uranium can be used to make a bomb.

Officials of the United States and some other Western countries believe that Iran is trying to attain the technology and know-how to make an atomic bomb. Iranian leaders insist that they are trying to make enriched uranium only for civilian use.

It is technically possible to manufacture enough highly enriched uranium for a bomb using a 164-centrifuge cascade, but the process would take 10 years. Weapons experts do not think that is Iran's plan. Instead, the experts say their concern is that running a small cascade would give Iran the technical knowledge to build and operate a far larger one.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran22mar22,1,7457617.story>

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San Francisco Chronicle

March 21, 2006

Pg. 1

Need For New U.S. Nuclear Arsenal Disputed

Existing warheads may last longer than believed, experts say

By James Sterngold, Chronicle Staff Writer

Scientists say evidence is mounting that the radioactive plutonium used in nuclear weapons could have a far longer useful life than previously estimated, raising questions about the need for an expensive Bush administration program to build more than a thousand replacement warheads.

With hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars potentially at stake, the research on the aging of this dangerous and complex weapons ingredient, being conducted at the nuclear weapons laboratories, is being followed closely by Bush administration officials, lawmakers and nuclear weapons experts.

Although the results are preliminary, some scientists who have reviewed parts of the research say the fuel could be potent for a century or more, far longer than the 45- to 60-year minimum lifespan for the plutonium components -- known as pits -- previously estimated by the weapons labs.

If that is true, said a Bay Area lawmaker whose committee oversees the weapons complex, Congress could decide that the new generations of replacement nuclear warheads sought by the Bush administration may not be needed for decades or that far fewer replacements would have to be built.

"This does have a direct correlation with the whole complex" of new weapons factories the administration is seeking, said Rep. Ellen Tauscher, D-Walnut Creek, a member of the House Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee.

The most expensive element in the administration's plan is expected to be a new pit factory that would be capable of building 120 per year. Tauscher said that if the plutonium is found to have a longer lifespan, "the need for 120 pits could be way off."

The issue may come to a head later this year. In debating the need for the replacement warheads, Congress required that the National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the weapons complex, report by this fall its latest assessment of the useful lifespan of plutonium. Research has been under way for several years at the weapons labs, Lawrence Livermore and Los Alamos, which are managed by the University of California, and the Sandia National Laboratories.

Portions of the research, though not finished, have been analyzed by some outside experts as part of the scientific peer review.

For now, the government refuses to release any lifespan estimates and would not comment on questions raised by the research. "Until the aging studies are complete, any further comment on plutonium aging would be purely speculative," said Bryan Wilkes, an NNSA spokesman.

But earlier this month Linton Brooks, the head of the NNSA, acknowledged during testimony before the House Strategic Forces Subcommittee that the lifespan could be longer. "It may turn out to be that it's 60 plus," said Brooks, as quoted by Global Security Newswire. "We're doing accelerated aging tests to find that out."

Previously, the weapons laboratories estimated that the plutonium remained potent for 45 to 60 years at a minimum. Eventually, scientists say, it would undergo radioactive decay, weakening the explosive force of the bombs.

But some scientists who sit on lab advisory committees or have followed some of the newer research say it appears the plutonium in pits may be reliable for at least 90 years.

Sidney Drell, a professor emeritus at the Stanford Linear Accelerator and a longtime government adviser on nuclear issues, said the new research suggested 60 years "is the lower limit, as far as I'm concerned."

"I wouldn't be surprised if 100 years is the new number," said Raymond Jeanloz, a physics professor at UC Berkeley who has served as a government adviser and helps monitor research at the weapons labs.

"They've really agonized about every conceivable detail," added Jeanloz, who is also chairman of the Committee on International Security and Arms Control at the National Academy of Sciences. "It's been very hard to come to a consensus. But it looks like it could be years or decades or millennia before any serious degradation takes place."

Nuclear weapons production and underground testing halted with the end of the Cold War, but Bush administration officials have argued that concerns over the U.S. stockpile -- some warheads are almost 40 years old -- and the reliability of plutonium have increased the need for a new weapons factory and replacement warheads.

"Today, our weapons are aging and now are being rebuilt in life-extension programs that are both difficult and costly," Brooks said at the hearing on March 1.

The administration's proposal, called the Reliable Replacement Warhead program, or RRW, was funded for the first time by Congress last year with \$25 million for the initial research.

The program is expected to cost hundreds of billions of dollars over the next several decades. The most complex element is expected to be the new factory for fabricating pits -- hollow spheres made of a plutonium alloy, encased in high explosives -- the components that start the atomic chain reaction in thermonuclear weapons.

The question is how the more recent research might affect the replacement program. Tauscher said she supports the program but that a longer plutonium lifespan could mean large reductions in the size of any pit factory.

But Siegfried Hecker, a former director of Los Alamos and a respected plutonium expert, cautioned against such conclusions by arguing that the United States could not live with uncertainty in its nuclear arsenal.

"The problem is, we get into an area where we have no experience," he said in an interview. "Plutonium metallurgy is my business. I worked with it for 40 years. I do not have the confidence that we can go greater than 45 years. I do not consider it worth the risk of certifying the stockpile beyond 45 years."

The risk, said Hecker, is overestimating the durability of a weapon that may need to be used in the most dire of circumstances.

But some scientists appear to be getting more, not less, certain about the current stockpile.

In an article written for a technical publication in 2003, two weapons lab scientists who are leaders in the aging research, Joseph Martz and Adam Schwartz, said, "Experience from stockpile surveillance programs reflects this point: Pits have remained remarkably pristine and free of corrosion, especially since the adoption of modern cleaning and sealing methods."

Bob Peurifoy, who worked as a senior weapons scientist at Sandia National Laboratories for nearly four decades and has served on government advisory panels, said he believes the aging problem has been exaggerated.

"I am a strong and unqualified supporter of a strong nuclear deterrent," said Peurifoy. "My professional life was based on that belief. I just think the Congress was conned" about the lifespan of plutonium and the need for replacement warheads for political purposes.

Peurifoy has championed making pits not out of plutonium but out of highly enriched uranium, which he said produces a slightly heavier but far more reliable weapon.

Uranium, he said, has a half-life of 700 million years -- it is 24,400 years for plutonium -- so radioactive decay is less of a concern, and it is easier to fabricate into pits. Also, in the early days of the weapons program, the United States tested and deployed warheads with uranium pits (the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima used uranium), so a great deal of data exists on how they work.

"I see no serious justification for the RRW they want," said Peurifoy.

ODD FINDING: WARHEADS TEND TO RIPEN WITH AGE

Modern thermonuclear weapons contain a reported 6,000 or so parts, but the most critical, expensive and dangerous is the pit, a hollow sphere made of a plutonium alloy, encased in high explosives. That is the so-called primary part of the two-stage warhead.

The primary nuclear detonation is triggered when the blast of the high explosives crushes the pit at such force that the plutonium atoms, under enormous pressure and a bombardment of sub-atomic particles, split apart in a runaway chain reaction, called fission. That energy -- as great as the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945 -- then ignites the more powerful secondary stage, which is essentially turbocharged with a booster gas, a hydrogen isotope called tritium.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, production stopped, the United States instituted a self-imposed ban on nuclear testing and the weapons design laboratories refocused their expertise on monitoring and refurbishing the existing weapons, not building new ones. The last warheads were built in the 1980s.

According to Siegfried Hecker, former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, plutonium is an exceedingly complex material that is difficult to work with in part because it can be a deadly carcinogen, requiring expensive safeguards, and in part because its properties can change suddenly in response to temperature, pressure or chemical shifts in the atmosphere.

The biggest concern relates to the fact that the dense plutonium atoms spontaneously decay, or split, producing a uranium atom and a helium atom.

Over time -- meaning decades -- tiny bubbles of helium can collect. The concern is that the bubbles could expand and other changes could take place that would reduce the energy released during fission.

But one of the metal's most unusual characteristics, scientists have discovered, is that while the plutonium atoms are decaying, another process is under way, called self-annealing. This process repairs the atomic structure, making the plutonium more stable.

In an article written for Physics Today in 2000, Raymond Jeanloz, a physics professor at UC Berkeley, wrote, "Pu [the symbol for plutonium] samples not only retain long-range order but actually get closer to the ideal crystal structure with increasing age."

In an article written for a technical publication in 2003, two weapons lab scientists, Joseph Martz and Adam Schwartz, said their research showed the helium bubbles in plutonium "will not affect performance for pits in excess of 60 years of age."

[http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/03/21/MNGL8HRDFL1.DTL&hw=Nuclear+Arsenal&sn=001&sc=1000)

[bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/03/21/MNGL8HRDFL1.DTL&hw=Nuclear+Arsenal&sn=001&sc=1000](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/03/21/MNGL8HRDFL1.DTL&hw=Nuclear+Arsenal&sn=001&sc=1000)

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New York Times

March 23, 2006

Briton Tried To Buy A-Bomb, Prosecution In Trial Contends

By Sarah Lyall

LONDON, March 22 — The prosecution in the trial of seven men accused of having links to Al Qaeda and plotting to carry out bomb attacks in Britain said on Wednesday that one of the men had inquired about buying an atomic bomb from Russian mafia figures in Belgium.

On Wednesday, the second day of the trial, a prosecution lawyer, David Waters, said the defendant, Salahuddin Amin, 30, had been asked by a man he met at a mosque in Luton, his hometown, to contact a third man, Abu Annis, about a "radioisotope bomb."

When Mr. Amin did so, Mr. Annis told him that "they had made contact with the Russian mafia in Belgium and from the mafia they were trying to buy this bomb," Mr. Waters said. While Mr. Amin later told the police that he did not believe it was likely that "you can go and pick an atomic bomb up and use it," the prosecutor said the incident was "an indication as to Amin's position in, and his usefulness to, the organization."

The defendants, all British and 18 to 33 years old, are accused of conspiring to cause an explosion "likely to endanger life" and of other crimes related to possession of materials for making bombs. The men were arrested before they could carry out any plans, and before bombs ripped through the London subway system in July 2005. But Mr. Waters said on Wednesday in the continuation of his opening statement that the defendants already had "most of the necessary components in hand" to build a bomb, including about 1,300 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer and a smaller amount of aluminum powder, and that even having a nonspecific plan was evidence of guilt. "It will hardly be in the public interest if the police had to wait for the explosion to take place and the deaths and damage to be caused before the perpetrators were guilty of a crime," he said.

The trial is expected to last several months. Six of the defendants — Omar Khyam, 24; Waheed Mahmood, 33; Shujah-Ud-Din Mahmood, 18; Anthony Garcia, 27; Nabeel Hussain, 20; and Jawad Akbar, 22 — were arrested in police raids in March 2004, during which, the police said, the fertilizer was seized at a storage depot in West London. Mr. Amin was arrested in February 2005, when he arrived at Heathrow Airport on a flight from Islamabad, Pakistan. The men had been under surveillance, and their conversations had been monitored for months.

The prosecution contends that the men spoke admiringly of a bomb attack in Madrid in March 2004 and mused repeatedly about how and when to carry out similar attacks in Britain.

Mr. Waters said the men went to Pakistan for explosives training, disguising themselves as tourists. Back in Britain, he said, the defendants discussed potential targets, mentioning, for instance, the gas, water and electrical supplies, the Bluewater shopping center in Kent and a "big nightclub in central London."

The prosecutors say Mr. Akbar, is heard on one of the surveillance tapes saying that a nightclub would be a good target because "no one could put their hands up and say they are innocent — all those slags dancing around," using a slang term for loose women.

In the taped conversations cited by the prosecution, the defendants were sometimes unwittingly revelatory about themselves and their family lives. Mr. Akbar was taped speaking anxiously to his wife, fretting about two missing CD's marked with the word "Transco," the owner of the high-voltage electricity systems in England and Wales and the high-pressure gas system across Britain.

Mr. Mahmood, worked at the time for Morrison Utility Services, a contractor serving Transco in southeast England. "You know what — if we get raided today, we're finished," Mr. Akbar is quoted by the prosecution as telling his wife. But then he refuses to tell her more. "The less you know, the better," he is quoted as saying. "Get your stuff and get into the kitchen."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/23/international/europe/23britain.html>

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Washington Times

March 23, 2006

Pg. 17

Missile Defense Still A Key

By James T. Hackett

In recent years, the need to protect the nation against nuclear-armed missiles has taken a back seat to the worldwide fight against al Qaeda and military operations in Iraq.

These hot wars dominate the news, while the missile defenses President Reagan began with the Strategic Defense Initiative 23 years ago today have all but disappeared from public notice.

The September 11, 2001, attacks revealed that U.S. cities were vulnerable and gave a glimpse of the horror nuclear weapons could produce. Thus, the attacks helped clarify the need for missile defenses. The danger since has been rising.

Today, Iran's radical Islamic regime appears determined to develop nuclear weapons and long-range missiles, North Korea says it has nuclear arms while increasing its missiles' range, al Qaeda threatens new attacks on the U.S., and China adds 100 ballistic missiles a year while threatening war over Taiwan.

Most disturbing is the wide extent of the international nuclear weapons bazaar that was run by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan. Today, Pakistan is friendly, but with an arsenal of nuclear weapons and large numbers of al Qaeda supporters, it presents a possible future danger of huge proportions. While President Pervez Musharraf is a U.S. ally, he is a frequent target of assassins. A takeover by radicals could put nuclear weapons and missiles in the hands of anti-American fanatics overnight.

President Bush is dealing with these dangers by continuing to deploy missile defenses and forming alliances with countries at risk. Japan, in range of North Korea's Nodong and Taepodong missiles and China's intermediate-range weapons, is rapidly improving its missile defenses. Tokyo is adding the Patriot PAC-3 missile interceptor, allowing the U.S. to field in Japan a forward-based X-band radar, and helping the U.S. develop a sea-based interceptor to add to both countries' Aegis ships.

Israel, South Korea, Australia, Turkey, India, Taiwan, Kuwait and other Persian Gulf sheikdoms have or plan to obtain missile defenses. NATO is considering them, and Poland appears willing to host U.S. interceptors to protect both the Eastern U.S. and our European allies against the Middle East threat.

The administration's 2007 budget, submitted to Congress last month, shows President Bush's commitment to complete the missile defense deployments now under way in Alaska and California. Eleven ground-based interceptors are in place and 40 are to be operational by 2009. In addition, a growing number of ship-based interceptors will be deployed on 18 Aegis cruisers and destroyers.

The seagoing X-band radar is on its way to the Aleutian Islands, where it will track warheads and help distinguish them from decoys. And these initial deployments will be enhanced in future years by addition of new space-based sensors and multiple kill vehicles to stop multiple warheads.

The administration asked Congress for \$10.4 billion for missile defense in 2007, an increase of \$1.6 billion over 2006. That includes \$2.8 billion for the ground-based defenses now being deployed. Much of the increase will go for extensive and realistic testing, in response to task force recommendations and in answer to those who complain of insufficient testing.

There also are increases for ship-based defenses and the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), both of which had successful test flights late last year.

The Airborne Laser (ABL), the main boost-phase intercept program, which made real progress last year and is on schedule to shoot down a target missile in 2008, will get \$631 million. While this is an increase over last year, the Missile Defense Agency has deferred ordering the second ABL aircraft until after the shootdown, delaying by years the operational status of this advanced system. That decision should be revisited so long-lead laser parts can be ordered early.

Most critics of missile defense have been muted since September 11, but they have not given up. They now complain the defenses being deployed won't work and need more testing. But that undercuts the main purpose of missile defense, which is deterrence. An opponent is unlikely to spend billions developing nuclear missiles that cannot get through the defense. But he may be inclined to make the investment if "experts" keep saying the defense will not work.

The effort Ronald Reagan started is now beginning to defend the country. It is none too soon, as nuclear weapons and missiles spread around the world, amid a possible clash of civilizations. Despite the lack of public attention, fielding missile defenses remains an important priority.

James T. Hackett is a contributing writer to The Washington Times and is based in Carlsbad, Calif.

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20060322-090717-7309r.htm>

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(Editor's Note: Hyperlink for referenced report follows article.)

USA Today

March 24, 2006

Pg. 8

Report: U.S. Missile Science Slumping

One observer says priorities simply shifted

By Matt Kelley, USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon risks running out of scientists to operate and upgrade the nation's arsenal of intercontinental nuclear and conventional missiles, according to a report released this week by the Defense Science Board.

As the nation's veteran engineers and scientists retire, the military will lose much of its expertise in long-range missile technology, the report says. That means the Air Force and Navy, which operate most of the 1960s-vintage missiles, will be unable to cope with system failures or develop improved weapons, the report says.

Not only are fewer American engineers and scientists choosing to work on missile technology, there are fewer of them altogether, the report says. Each year, about 70,000 Americans receive undergraduate and graduate science and engineering degrees that are defense related, compared with a combined 200,000 in China and India, the report says.

The government should pay higher salaries and offer other incentives to attract more experts into the strategic missile field, the report says.

A task force of five outside missile experts spent two years preparing the report at the Pentagon's request. Although the board lacks the power to force the Pentagon to act, Lt. Gen. Frank Klotz, acting head of the Air Force Space Command, told a Senate committee this month that the Pentagon is trying to improve its recruiting and retention of missile experts. Space Command runs the intercontinental ballistic missile system.

The report does not give specifics on the number of experts who are retiring or the numbers needed to replace them, but it says about 20,000 research and development scientists and engineers work in the aerospace industry as a whole, down from more than 140,000 in the mid-1980s.

John Steinbruner, head of the Center for International and Security Studies at the University of Maryland, says few scientists want to work on long-range missiles because "it's not too hard to figure out that American security doesn't depend on this any more."

Instead, Steinbruner says, the Pentagon's priorities have shifted toward fighting terrorism and "low-intensity conflicts," such as the insurgency in Iraq.

The report, he says, sounds like the Pentagon advisory board is "just trying to keep the money flowing" and may be biased toward Cold War-era ballistic missile systems.

The report also questions a Pentagon plan to seek more than \$500 million to replace nuclear warheads on some submarine-launched Trident ballistic missiles with conventional warheads. The Pentagon says those missiles could be used to strike fortified targets such as nuclear weapons facilities in rogue nations.

Converting the warheads on these missiles will be difficult, the report says, because the Pentagon lacks the necessary engineering skills. It adds that technical requirements for non-nuclear warheads are much different for long-range missiles from those for shorter-range missiles or nuclear weapons.

Panel cites litany of weaknesses

A two-year study by a panel of the Defense Science Board found several flaws in the nation's strategic missile system. They include:

Lack of expertise. There's a shortage of industry and government expertise in long-range missile systems, and what exists may not be available for future systems.

Rebuilding costs. It would take five to seven years to rebuild a skilled workforce, and even then there would be mistakes and cost overruns because of inexperience.

Failure to cope. The Department of Defense "may not be able to cope with unanticipated failures" in intercontinental nuclear missiles.

Inexperience. It's been 25 years since the last long-range missile was designed, and few in the Air Force have helped design a missile system.

Shortages. There's an "alarming" lack of missile expertise in the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, where severe shortages of civilian experts exist in 124 of 163 critical skills areas.

Need for incentives. Defense contractors and the Pentagon must increase pay and incentives to attract "the best and brightest students" to missile programs they have avoided in favor of better-paying jobs.

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060324/a_strategic24.art.htm

Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force

Future Strategic Strike Skills

http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2006-03-Skills_Report.pdf

Defense Science Board Home Page

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Christian Science Monitor

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Pg. 1

India Nuke Deal Meets Wary Congress

Bush presses for approval of a pact taking a different approach to nonproliferation. Some see it as rewarding renegade behavior.

By Peter Grier, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration's landmark nuclear deal with India could alter the world's nonproliferation regime, and rewrite the geopolitical rules of South Asia.

If it passes Congress in its current form, that is. And that is far from a foregone conclusion.

From President Bush on down, White House officials in recent days have insisted that the India agreement should remain untouched, lest it unravel. But hearings on the controversial pact begin in the Senate next week, and many Senate and House members have indicated they may want to pencil in restrictions on India's behavior, or otherwise modify the deal.

"It's not going to come out the same way it went in," says Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association in Washington.

The result of months of intense negotiations, the US nuclear agreement with India was signed by Mr. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on March 2, during Bush's visit to India.

Under the deal, India is to separate its civilian and nuclear energy programs over the next eight years. In return, it will receive US civilian nuclear expertise, and nuclear fuel, to help it meet ambitious goals for growth in its reactor program.

The civilian plans would be subject to international inspections - a first for India, which is not a signatory to the Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Military facilities would remain unchecked by the international community, however. And the deal does not require oversight of India's prototype fast-breeder reactors, which, when operational, can quickly produce large amounts of plutonium.

Bush on Wednesday urged Congress to approve the deal. Despite the fact that it stands outside the NPT regime, India has proved itself to be a nonproliferating nation, said Bush, and a reliable steward of nuclear technology. Helping India produce civilian reactors will lessen its demand for oil in the long run. In turn, this will reduce upward pressure on oil prices, said Bush.

"It's in our interest that India use nuclear power to power their economic growth," said the president at a stop in Wheeling, W.Va.

Other supporters of the deal note that India is a rising democracy and an economically vibrant nation with which the US desires a closer relationship.

Disagreement over India's nuclear technology for years has been the main obstacle to warmer US-India ties.

Removing this obstacle would cause a tectonic shift in the geopolitics of the region, say its supporters, with the US gaining a possible counterbalance to the influence of China, and perhaps even Iran.

"India has the sense that finally they've come in from the cold," said Salman Haidar, a former Indian diplomat and senior fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, at a Council on Foreign Relations seminar last week.

But in the US, lawmakers aren't rushing to promote the deal. Instead, many have seemed wary of approving a pact that they see as rewarding a nation that has long snubbed world nonproliferation efforts.

For the deal to be completed, Congress must approve legislation exempting India from US laws that restrict trade with non-NPT nations. Before that happens, many lawmakers may seek new conditions on the US-India agreement, Rep. Henry Hyde (R) of Illinois, chairman of the House International Relations Committee, said this week.

Sen. Richard Lugar (R) of Indiana, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has given no indication of support - or disapproval - of the deal. But one respected former lawmaker voiced objections earlier this week.

Former Sen. Sam Nunn (D) of Georgia said the deal would harm the vital interests of the US.

"If I were still in Congress, I would be skeptical and looking at conditions that could be attached," said Senator Nunn in an interview with The Washington Post.

In general, critics of the deal worry that the administration is making a wager that the geostrategic benefits of engaging India will outweigh the risks of increased nuclear proliferation.

By exempting India's fast-breeder reactor program from oversight, and in effect allowing India to continue building up its nuclear arsenal apace, the US appears to be rewarding a nation previously branded as a nuclear renegade. This is a bad example for Iran, and North Korea, say critics.

It might encourage Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Ukraine, among other nations, to rethink their current nonnuclear status.

Nor is it clear that India has the same geostrategic concerns about China that the US does. And India is eagerly pursuing energy deals with Iran.

"So this is a very big bet, a very big bet. It could be as big a bet as Iraq," said Michael Krepon, president emeritus of the Stimson Center, at last week's Council on Foreign Relations meeting.

Among the conditions that lawmakers might try to place on the deal: inspection of India's fast-breeder program or a ban on further Indian production of fissile material for weapons.

At the least, "this isn't going to go as fast as the administration would like," says Mr. Kimball of the Arms Control Association.

Washington Times

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Pg. 16

Al Qaeda's Nuclear Option

By Arnaud de Borchgrave

President Bush says frequently "we are fighting them over there so they won't come over here." "Them" are transnational terrorists and "over there" is Iraq.

The insurgency in Iraq has much to do with al Qaeda's plans for a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) act of terrorism in the United States, but not the way the White House believes. Assuming the Bush administration is successful in midwifing democracy out of a near-civil war situation in Iraq, the WMD threat level will remain unchanged. High, that is.

Paradoxical though this may seem to Washington's armchair strategists, the defeat of the al Qaeda-Sunni insurgency in Iraq would actually heighten, not lessen, the danger of a September 11 CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) attack. Defeated by the U.S. in Afghanistan and again in Iraq, al Qaeda would have to conclude its strategy of forcing the U.S. into a humiliating, Vietnamlike retreat has failed.

Arabic-speaker Professor Gilles Kepel, one of France's leading experts on al Qaeda, published last week "Al Qaeda dans le Texte," an analysis of the public and (intercepted) private utterances of the two Z's -- Ayman al-Zawahri (Osama bin Laden's No. 2) and Abu Musab Zarqawi, al Qaeda's insurgency honcho in Iraq. Stripped of its complexities, al Qaeda's strategy, Mr. Kepel explains, is to defeat the U.S. in Iraq, use this victory to roll over traditional oil-rich regimes in the Gulf that are security wards of the U.S., and then focus on Israel. But there is now an obstacle even greater than the U.S. -- Iran. Tehran, as seen through Zawahri's geopolitical viewfinder, is already calling the shots in large parts of Iraq. Whether the U.S. stays or leaves Iraq, concludes Zawahri, it's still Iran's ballgame. Which brings al Qaeda back to its WMD-in-America strategy.

"The Race Between Cooperation and Catastrophe," or why "the [nuclear] threat is outrunning our response" is how Sam Nunn, the former senator and co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, describes an overarching terrorist construct. The starter's gun for this new race went off at the end of the Cold War. Congress has appropriated almost \$12 billion under Nunn-Lugar legislation designed to enhance security in scores of former Soviet and now Russian nuclear weapons and nuclear materials storage sites. Another \$20 billion was pledged for the same purpose at a G-8 summit of the major industrialized nations in Canada three years ago -- \$1 billion by the U.S. and \$1 billion by the other seven per year for 10 years.

There has been no cooperation from India in the nuclear security field, says Matthew Bunn, director of the Atom Project at Harvard. "China," he adds, "has secured one civilian facility."

With more than \$30 billion in the button-down-the-nukes kitty, more than half the security work remains to be done. There are 43 countries with more than 100 research reactors or related facilities that store enough highly enriched uranium nuclear materials to make several bombs. Only 20 percent of these sites are properly secured, says Mr. Nunn, and less than a handful meet U.S. Energy Department security standards, says Mr. Bunn. Most countries consider the Energy Department security criteria too demanding.

Rather than try to steal or buy one of thousands of Russian tactical nukes, or nerve gas artillery shells, a WMD terrorist is far more likely to knock off the night watchman, lower the chain-link fence somewhere in Switzerland or Italy and drive off with sufficient materials for a nuclear device. Actually making a nuclear bomb after that is the easy part; the recipe is on the Internet.

Mr. Nunn, chairman of the board of trustees at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, says we appear to have forgotten the "devastating, world-changing impact of a nuclear [terrorist] attack. "If a 10-kiloton nuclear device goes off in Midtown Manhattan on a typical work day, it could kill more than half a million people," he explains.

Ten kiloton is a plausible yield "for a crude terrorist bomb," according to Mr. Nunn.

Hauling that volume of explosives would require a freight train 100 cars long. As a nuclear bomb, it could easily fit on the back of a pickup truck.

Another Nunn scenario has a terrorist group with insider help acquiring a radiological source from an industrial or medical facility; say cesium-137 in the form of powdered cesium chloride. Conventional explosives are used to incorporate cesium into a "dirty bomb," then detonated in New York's financial district. A 60-square block area has to be evacuated. Millions flee the city in panic. Only two dozen are killed but billions of dollars of real estate is declared uninhabitable. Cleanup will take years -- and many more billions.

What interests bin Laden and Zawahri beyond casualty lists is collateral damage to civil liberties, privacy and the world economy. America, as they see it, would be knocked off its pinnacle. This would be the shot heard around the world and hundreds of millions of either frightened or jubilant Muslims would flock to the Muslim world's black Jolly Roger of white skull and crossbones.

In a routine exchange of information, Russia's chief intelligence officer in Washington notified his CIA liaison officer that al Qaeda operatives had been scouting nuclear storage sites in Russia. It would be a miracle if nothing had been stolen from Russia's long ill-guarded nuclear weapons storage depots during the collapse of the Soviet Union when anything and everything was for sale. We also know from sketches found in al Qaeda's safe houses in Kabul and Kandahar that bin Laden was interested in nuclear bomb design. Two Pakistani nuclear scientists from A.Q. Khan's stable were in Kandahar when this reporter was there three months before September 11, 2001.

The distance remaining to near-perfect security can be measured by how Mr. Nunn describes the adequacy of the U.S.-Russian response to the terrorist nuclear threat.

On a scale of 1 to 10," says Mr. Nunn, "I would give us about a 3, with the last summit between Presidents Bush and Putin moving us closer to a 4."

Arnaud de Borchgrave is editor at large of The Washington Times and of United Press International.

<http://www.washtimes.com/commentary/20060323-083951-9939r.htm>

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