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New York Times

April 8, 2006

Chief Of U.N. Monitoring Agency To Conduct Nuclear Talks In Iran

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS, April 7 — Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the United Nations' nuclear monitoring agency in Vienna, will visit Iran next week to conduct talks on the country's nuclear program, his agency announced Friday.

Mr. ElBaradei, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, is to meet with Ali Larijani, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, and other senior Iranian officials during what is expected to be a two-day visit, a senior agency official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The official added that Mr. ElBaradei would raise "outstanding safeguard verification issues and other confidence-building measures" requested by the 35-country board of the monitor, the International Atomic Energy Agency. Agency inspectors arrived in Tehran on Friday to visit the country's various nuclear sites before the trip.

In a nonbinding statement on March 29, the United Nations Security Council called for Iran to freeze all of its uranium enrichment-related activities within 30 days, as demanded by the nuclear agency's board.

But Iran has consistently rejected such a move, saying its uranium-enrichment activities are solely for peaceful research purposes, not a step toward building a nuclear weapon, as the United States and a number of other countries contend.

At a news conference in Madrid on Thursday, Mr. ElBaradei said: "There are still a number of outstanding issues in Iran that we need to clarify. The picture is not very clear; the picture is hazy." He added, "We have seen issues that we need to understand, before we can say we are satisfied that all activities in Iran are exclusively for peaceful purposes."

Mr. ElBaradei must report on Iran's progress to comply with international demands to both his agency's board and to the Security Council at the end of April.

"This visit will provide Iran an opportunity in advance of that report to come forward with information required by the I.A.E.A. to fill in the gaps in the history of Iran's nuclear activities," the agency official said. "He is not going there to negotiate any settlement. His going there is a part of an ongoing verification process, and this requires face-to-face contact."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/08/world/middleeast/08iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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International Herald Tribune

April 8, 2006

Hopes Rise As North Koreans Attend Tokyo Talks

By Associated Press

TOKYO--North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator arrived Friday in Japan to attend a security conference with officials from the five nations that are also involved in talks on halting the North's nuclear weapons program.

The confluence of top officials from the six nations embroiled in the nuclear standoff has raised the possibility of restarting talks that have been stalled since November by a dispute over U.S. restrictions imposed on North Korean companies for alleged illegal financial activities.

Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, who flew to Tokyo via Beijing with other North Korean officials, told reporters in Tokyo he "would not reject" a request for bilateral talks with the United States on the sidelines of the conference, according to the Kyodo news agency.

But he also warned he would have to "test the winds in Tokyo" before making predictions about the outcome of the conference.

"I'm here for the security meeting," Kim said. "It has nothing to do with the six-party talks."

The U.S. Embassy said the U.S. representative, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, had no plans for one-on-one meetings with the North Korean delegation. But Japan planned to urge Kim and Hill to meet, according to news reports.

Japan, meanwhile, is hoping to hold talks with North Korean officials.

"If there is an opportunity, it is possible that we may meet to discuss issues between Japan and North Korea," the chief cabinet secretary, Shinzo Abe, said Friday.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he hoped the conference "would make progress."

The U.S. Embassy announced Tuesday that officials from the six countries - the United States, China, Japan, Russia and two Koreas - would meet at the privately sponsored security conference in Tokyo on Monday and Tuesday.

Preliminary meetings for the forum, sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, begin Sunday.

2 Koreas agree to talks

North and South Korea have agreed to resume bilateral talks later this month as diplomatic efforts to revive stalled six-party negotiations on the North's nuclear program gain momentum, Agence France-Presse reported from Seoul. Almost a month after pulling out of the negotiations over U.S.-South Korean military drills, North Korea proposed resuming inter-Korean high-level talks in Pyongyang from April 21 to 24, the South Korean Unification Ministry said Friday.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/04/07/news/korea.php>

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New York Times
April 9, 2006

U.S. Stepping Up Plans To Attack Iran, New Yorker Article Says

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, April 8 — The Bush administration, which publicly advocates negotiations to halt Iran's nuclear program, is accelerating military planning for possible attacks against Iran, and has not ruled out using tactical nuclear weapons, according to a new article.

The article, by Seymour M. Hersh in *The New Yorker*, asserts that the Pentagon this winter presented the White House with an option to use bunker-buster nuclear bombs against Iran's underground nuclear sites. When the Joint Chiefs of Staff later sought to drop that option, unidentified officials at the White House resisted, the article stated. The article cites numerous anonymous sources, including former Pentagon and intelligence officials, as well as sources described as having ties to the Pentagon but no direct involvement in its decision-making.

Asked about the article, Frederick Jones, a National Security Council spokesman, said Saturday: "We're not going to discuss military planning. As the president has said repeatedly, we along with the international community are pursuing a diplomatic solution to the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program."

But four Pentagon, military and administration officials who participate in high-level deliberations on Iran and who were granted anonymity to speak candidly rejected the article's contention that the Bush administration was considering nuclear weapons in a possible strike against Iran.

"I've never heard the issue of nukes taken off or put on the table," a senior Pentagon official said.

The article also states that American combat troops have been ordered to infiltrate Iran to collect target data and to cultivate relationships with indigenous groups who oppose the government in Tehran.

"The article contains information that is inaccurate," said Michele Ness, a spokeswoman for the Central Intelligence Agency. She declined to elaborate.

The article asserts that American carrier-based attack planes have been flying simulated nuclear-bomb runs within range of Iranian coastal radars. A Pentagon official said he was unaware of any such flights, but added that within the last three weeks Iran had ratcheted up its air defenses so high that it accidentally shot one of its own aircraft. Senior administration officials, while emphasizing that their preferred path is diplomatic, have not ruled out military attacks if negotiations should fail. Senior officers and Pentagon officials said war planners, in particular Air Force targeting teams, have updated contingencies for dealing with Iran's nuclear ambitions, as they periodically do. But they emphasized that this did not reflect any guidance from the civilian leadership to prepare for military confrontation.

"There have been no operational plans or options presented to the White House," said the senior Pentagon official. Top commanders say the military options range from bad to unimaginable. None guarantee success, planners say, given that dozens of suspected sites are buried deep underground or near urban centers. Many risk causing not only casualties but a political crisis in the Middle East.

Mr. Hersh is a well-known journalist credited with uncovering major stories including the My Lai massacre in Vietnam in 1969 and details of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib in Iraq. Some military and political officials have contested details of some of his articles, and some critics say he is too eager to report assertions critical of the government that are difficult to fully substantiate.

Scott Shane contributed reporting for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html>

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Washington Post
April 10, 2006
Pg. 10

Official Dismisses Iran Policy Reports

Articles on Possible Airstrikes Are 'Ill-Informed,' White House Says

By Matt Spetalnick and Steve Holland, Reuters

The Bush administration said yesterday that its priority is to seek a diplomatic solution to the dispute over Iran's nuclear ambitions, amid reports of stepped-up planning for possible U.S. airstrikes.

A senior administration official played down prospects for military action, calling the reports "ill-informed," but stopped short of an outright denial.

Iran accused the United States of waging a "psychological war" out of desperation.

The U.S. official spoke after a New Yorker magazine article said Washington was stepping up planning for a possible bombing campaign against Iran, despite publicly pushing for a negotiated settlement.

The Washington Post, citing unnamed U.S. officials and independent analysts, also reported that the administration was studying options for strikes against Iran as part of a broader strategy of coercive diplomacy. The newspaper said that no attack was likely soon and that many specialists inside and outside the U.S. government harbor strong doubts about whether such action would be effective. But it said the intent was to show Iran the seriousness of Washington's intentions.

According to the senior official, "The president's priority is to find a diplomatic solution to a problem the entire world recognizes." The official added, "Those who are drawing broad, definitive conclusions based on normal defense and intelligence planning are ill-informed and are not knowledgeable of the administration's thinking on Iran."

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw told BBC Television yesterday that a U.S. military strike was "not on the agenda" and any idea that Washington could use tactical nuclear weapons against Iran was "completely nuts."

Iran insists it wants nuclear technology only for power generation. Washington believes that Iran is trying to build an atomic bomb, and the United States refuses to rule out military options to deal with what it says is one of the world's biggest threats.

Appeals from the United States for sanctions on Iran have been frustrated by the reluctance of Russia and China, fellow U.N. Security Council veto-holders, to take such action.

The New Yorker article, mostly citing unidentified current and former officials, said Bush views Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as a "potential Adolf Hitler" and sees "regime change" in Tehran as the ultimate goal.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/09/AR2006040901165.html>

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Washington Times

April 10, 2006

Pg. 4

U.S. Discounts Iran Strike Report

Speculation 'ill-informed'

By Associated Press

The White House yesterday sought to dampen the idea of an American military strike on Iran, saying the U.S. is conducting "normal defense and intelligence planning" as President Bush seeks a diplomatic solution to Tehran's suspected nuclear-weapons program.

Administration officials -- from President Bush on down -- have left open the possibility of a military response if Iran does not end its nuclear ambitions. Several reports published yesterday said the administration was studying options for military strikes; one account raised the possibility of using nuclear bombs against Iran's underground nuclear sites.

Britain's foreign secretary called the idea of a nuclear strike "completely nuts."

Dan Bartlett, counselor to Mr. Bush, cautioned against reading too much into administration planning.

"The president's priority is to find a diplomatic solution to a problem the entire world recognizes," he said yesterday.

"And those who are drawing broad, definitive conclusions based on normal defense and intelligence planning are ill-informed and are not knowledgeable of the administration's thinking on Iran."

Specialists say a military strike on Iran would be risky and complicated. U.S. forces already are preoccupied with Iraq and Afghanistan, and an attack against Iran could inflame U.S. problems in the Muslim world.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw, in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corp., said Britain would not launch a pre-emptive strike on Iran, and he was as "certain as he could be" that neither would the U.S.

He said he has a high suspicion that Iran is developing a civilian nuclear capability that in turn could be used for nuclear weapons, but there is "no smoking gun" to prove it and justify military action.

"I understand people's frustration with the diplomatic process," Mr. Straw said. "It takes a long time and is quite a subtle process. The reason why we're opposed to military action is because it's an infinitely worse option, and there's no justification for it."

The U.N. Security Council has demanded Iran suspend its uranium-enrichment program. But Iran so far has refused to halt its nuclear activity, saying the small-scale enrichment project was strictly for research and not for development of nuclear weapons.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stressed in an April 1 interview with British television channel ITV that the United States is committed to diplomacy to solve the issue. "However," she added, "the president of the United States doesn't take his options off the table."

Pentagon spokesman Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros said yesterday that the president and State Department are working with other nations "to address diplomatically the troublesome activities of the Iranian government."

"And the U.S. military never comments on contingency planning," he said.

For its part, Iran also brushed aside the reports as a U.S. ploy.

"This is a psychological war launched by Americans because they feel angry and desperate regarding Iran's nuclear dossier," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters in Tehran. "Iran is not afraid of threatening language."

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060409-113630-4412r.htm>

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Miami Herald

April 10, 2006

Iran's Defenses Weak, Analysts Say

The Iranian military's ability to defend the country's nuclear facilities appears very limited, according to observers inside and outside the country.

By Hannah Allam, Knight Ridder News Service

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran probably couldn't mount much of a defense against a U.S. air attack on its nuclear sites, but such action would likely rally moderate Iranians around their ultra-conservative leaders and strengthen Iranian resolve to resist efforts to make it give up its nuclear program, Iranian and Western analysts here believe.

Iran trumpeted the debut of new missiles during war games it conducted last week in the Persian Gulf as evidence that it has updated its military and that American attackers would face difficult odds if they were to try to bomb research centers.

President Bush and European leaders worried by Iran's pursuit of the ability to enrich uranium -- a process that can produce both fuel for power plants and material for building bombs -- have said they want to resolve the conflict diplomatically. An article in this week's New Yorker, however, quotes unnamed sources as saying that the Pentagon this winter presented Bush with the option of using bunker-buster nuclear bombs against Iran's underground nuclear sites.

Britain's Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, branded the idea "completely nuts," in an appearance Sunday on BBC1's Sunday AM Programme. He called military action against Iran "inconceivable."

Military utility aside, the value of Iran's new weapons lies largely in what they might do for Iranian national morale. Military analysts here, as well as in Washington and Moscow, say Tehran's new hardware is unreliable and ineffective. In addition, the Iranian air force is threadbare and its anti-air defenses are limited and antique. Its navy, even with a new torpedo unveiled last week that supposedly travels at speeds in excess of 200 mph underwater, would be no match for the 27 U.S. warships based in and around the Persian Gulf.

The one bright spot, from the Iranian perspective, is the nation's army, whose sheer size would make an Iraq-style invasion, in the opinion of analysts, all but impossible. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is believed to have millions of troops at his disposal from the military, the elite Revolutionary Guard corps and its vast paramilitary. Still, Iranian officials are working hard to persuade Western leaders -- and their own people -- that Iran could strike back.

"This regime is trying to send a message that it's strong enough to retaliate against any possible military attack against Iran, that it's not like its neighbor Iraq, which the Americans could easily invade," said Davoud Hermidas Bavand, a political analyst in Tehran.

Iran is notoriously secretive about its defense capabilities, and the past week's display of homegrown weapons came as a surprise.

Iran said it tested the land-to-sea Kowsar missile, designed to sink ships, an Iranian-made torpedo, a sonar-evading underwater missile and a radar-evading rocket. The systems were greeted skeptically by outside analysts.

"I would call it a show of words," said Anthony Cordesman, a defense analyst with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. He discounted Iranian claims about the effectiveness of the weapons, especially a sonar-avoiding underwater missile.

"The only way you can totally avoid sonar is to move underwater faster than sound," he said.

Still, Iran's ground force would remain a deterrent to any Iraq-style invasion, and some argue that an airstrike might backfire by rallying even the most dissident Iranians around a national tragedy.

Knight Ridder Newspapers correspondents Drew Brown in Washington and Brian Bonner of the St. Paul Pioneer Press in Moscow contributed to this report.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/14305454.htm>

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Los Angeles Times
April 10, 2006

N. Korea Sees No Return To Talks

By Associated Press

TOKYO — North Korea said Sunday that it wouldn't return to six-nation talks on its nuclear weapons program unless the United States lifted financial sanctions on North Korean companies. The announcement clouded prospects for a breakthrough ahead of a security conference in Tokyo.

"Is there anything to do if the United States doesn't change its position?" said Song Il Hyuck, a member of the North Korean delegation.

He said North Korea never opposed the six-way talks and was ready to resume them if the U.S. lifted sanctions imposed on a Macao-based bank and North Korean companies for alleged illegal activities.

U.S. officials have said Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, scheduled to arrive in Japan today, had no plan to meet with the North Korean delegation.

Song's comments came amid a flurry of diplomatic activity on the sidelines of a private security conference in Tokyo that has delegates from the six nations in the nuclear talks: the United States, the two Koreas, China, Japan and Russia.

Talks last November yielded an agreement by the North Korean government in Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for aid and security guarantees.

But there has been no progress on implementing that pledge, and Pyongyang is refusing to return to the talks unless the United States lifts its financial sanctions over allegations of counterfeiting and other illegal activities by North Korea. The U.S. has said the sanctions will stay in place and are not related to the nuclear negotiations.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-norkor10apr10,1,5141994.story>

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New York Times
April 12, 2006

Iran Says It Is Making Nuclear Fuel, Defying U.N.

By Nazila Fathi, David E. Sanger and William J. Broad

TEHRAN, April 11 — Iran announced Tuesday that its nuclear engineers had advanced to a new phase in the enrichment of uranium, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and a series of the country's ruling clerics declared that the nation would now speed ahead, in defiance of a United Nations Security Council warning, to produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale.

"Iran has joined the nuclear countries of the world," Mr. Ahmadinejad said during a large, carefully staged and nationally televised celebration in Mashhad, which included video presentations of each step of the nuclear process that he declared Iran had mastered. "The nuclear fuel cycle at the laboratory level has been completed, and uranium with the desired enrichment for nuclear power plants was achieved."

The White House, which has charged that Iran is secretly trying to develop fuel for nuclear weapons, at first reacted mildly to the announcement, saying Iran was "moving in the wrong direction." But later in the day it sounded a more ominous tone, with the National Security Council announcing that the United States would work with the United Nations Security Council "to deal with the significant threat posed by the regime's efforts to acquire nuclear weapons."

Outside experts said that while the country appears to have passed a milestone — one it has approached before with smaller-scale enrichment of uranium — the announcement may have had less to do with an engineering feat than with carefully timed political theater intended to convince the West that the program is unstoppable.

The declaration comes at a time of intense speculation in Washington that preliminary plans are advancing to take military action against Iran's nuclear sites if diplomacy fails, an idea Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld dismissed Tuesday as "fantasy land."

The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, is scheduled to arrive in Tehran on Wednesday to make another appeal for Iran to halt its enrichment program and avoid a confrontation with

the West. Iranian officials said Dr. ElBaradei would face a changed situation, and American officials said they suspected that Iran's strategy is to portray its effort as a fait accompli.

The news came as another major setback for the European nations that have pressed for three years to persuade Iran to halt its fuel production program, and for President Bush. On Monday, Mr. Bush repeated that his "stated goal" was that "we do not want the Iranians to have a nuclear weapon, the capacity to make a nuclear weapon, or the knowledge as to how to make a nuclear weapon."

For that reason, he has opposed allowing Iran to enrich uranium, even though Iran has signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and has the right to produce fuel for nuclear power reactors.

If the Iranian declaration is correct, the enrichment and what appear to be rudimentary bomb-making documents that international inspectors have found in Iran suggest Iranians may now have most of the knowledge that Mr. Bush has sought to deny them.

At the least, they appear poised to be able eventually to expand enrichment on an industrial scale and, if they are determined to do so, enrich the uranium to levels necessary for an atomic weapon. But so far the quantities that the country has produced appear to be minuscule, and the enrichment level announced today — 3.5 percent — would work for producing power, not warheads.

International inspectors are stationed at Iran's main enrichment facility at Natanz, and presumably will be able to confirm or refute Iranian claims in coming days, assuming they have access to centrifuges.

Centrifuges are devices whose rotors spin very rapidly to enrich, or concentrate, a rare form of uranium known as uranium 235, which can then be used to fuel nuclear reactors or atom bombs. The 164 centrifuges Iran said it has strung together in a cascade are enough to test the technology, but with such a small number would take years to produce enough uranium for even one weapon.

"This 164 machines is more industrial," said a European diplomat who monitors Iran's program and spoke on the condition of anonymity. "But still, it's not like they haven't come close to achieving this in the past."

Despite claims on Tuesday of an enrichment breakthrough, Iran has in the past seven years repeatedly used centrifuges and lasers to enrich uranium, according to reports by the nuclear agency. But the amounts have apparently been small and the setups experimental.

Mr. Ahmadinejad reiterated that Iran's nuclear program was being developed for industrial and power purposes alone, and said his country "does not get its strength from nuclear arsenals."

But he did his best to turn the development to political advantage.

"I declare at this historic moment, with the blessings of God almighty and the efforts of our scientists, that we have mastered the nuclear fuel cycle on a laboratory scale and on Sunday our young scientists have produced enriched uranium required for nuclear plants," Mr. Ahmadinejad said.

"Access to the nuclear fuel cycle is a national demand and our people have repeatedly stressed that they want to have it."

His speech, given before a mural of doves in flight and a motto in English, was bracketed by recitations from the Koran and followed by chants of "God is Great."

Before he spoke, a small parade of men in traditional costumes danced as a thin silver box said to contain the first enriched uranium was carried to the stage. An announcer said the box would be preserved at a museum.

State-run television repeatedly showed footage of scientists in white uniforms working in what seemed to be a nuclear facility.

Mr. Ahmadinejad was careful to position Iran as operating within the existing proliferation rules, saying his country's nuclear activities have been "under complete, unprecedented" supervision by the atomic energy agency.

But he did not mention that he has restricted the access of those inspectors to some sites in recent months, and that inspectors have yet to receive explanations of the documents that appear to have bomb designs, or an explanation of the centrifuge equipment and designs the country bought in the mid-1990's from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear engineer who helped start Iran's program.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said Iran would continue to allow inspectors to watch its progress. "Today we are interested to operate under I.A.E.A. supervision what has been achieved," he said. "And what is going to be achieved in the future is within the framework of the rights of the nation."

David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a private research group in Washington, said that the announcement had been expected, but that the quantities of enriched uranium were probably small.

"They need to learn a lot more to produce it in significant quantities and they need to build a lot more centrifuges," he said.

Dr. ElBaradei is required to report back to the Security Council by April 28 on whether Iran has acceded to the demand late last month that it shut down its facilities within 30 days. One senior European diplomat said that in Iran,

Dr. ElBaradei will "argue that they've gotten to enrichment, so it's time to shut the process down, and end the problem."

The question of whether Iran has the right to continue nuclear research has been at the heart of the conflict between Iran and the United States and its European allies this year. Iran rejected a Russian offer to enrich uranium in Russia for an Iranian nuclear plant because the deal would not allow any nuclear activity in Iran.

Nazila Fathi reported from Tehran for this article, David E. Sanger from Washington, and William J. Broad from New York.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/12/world/middleeast/12iran.html>

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New York Times

April 12, 2006

Pg. 1

At The White House, Engaging Iran With Words Over Action

By David E. Sanger and Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, April 11 — One of President Bush's most senior foreign policy advisers spoke with unusual candor last week about the quandary the White House faces as it tries to confront Iran.

"The problem is that our policy has been all carrots and no sticks," the adviser told a gathering of academics and outside strategists, according to members of the audience. "And the Iranians know it."

It is partly for that reason, other administration officials say, that President Bush and his aides see some benefits in the increasing public discussion about what the White House may do if diplomacy fails to persuade Iran to halt what they suspect is a nuclear weapons program.

Iran's announcement on Tuesday that it had succeeded in enriching uranium — a significant step toward building a weapon, which most experts believe is still years away — is bound to heighten the escalation of threats between Washington and Tehran.

Even before the announcement, news accounts in recent days of what airstrikes could look like, appearing in *The New Yorker*, *The Washington Post* and elsewhere, served as what one senior official called "a reminder" to the Iranian government and to Europe, Russia and China "of where this could go one day."

But at the Pentagon and elsewhere in the administration, officials say the prospect of military action remains remote in the short term and highly problematic beyond that.

The issue remains delicate within an administration that has identified Iran as a major threat. The senior adviser who spoke candidly at last week's gathering did so only under ground rules that guaranteed him anonymity, and members of the audience reported his comments on the condition that they also not be identified.

"Is it a good thing for the Iranians to think there are occasions where the U.S. would use force? Sure," said Eliot A. Cohen, a professor at Johns Hopkins University who directed the Air Force's definitive study of the first war against Iraq. "But I don't get a sense that people in the administration are champing at the bit to launch another war in the Persian Gulf."

Others suggest that the vague drumbeat of talk about military action may be less aimed at Tehran than at China and Russia — two countries that have said they oppose even the threat of economic sanctions against Iran, much less threats to set back the Iranian program by obliterating its facilities.

"In Tehran, the threat of military action is double-edged," said Ashton B. Carter, a Harvard security expert who worked on nuclear issues in the Clinton administration. "It may scare the leadership, but it could also cause people to rally around the leadership. Where it's most effective is showing the Russians and the Chinese that we are serious about stopping this program."

The question is how serious, and on that question the administration seems happy to create a strategic fog. Officials at the Pentagon say military planners are examining and updating a variety of contingencies for possible military action against Iran. But they quickly add that such updates are routine.

On Tuesday, as the Iranians were announcing that they had successfully enriched a test amount of uranium, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld dismissed the growing tempo of reports about plans to attack Iran as a "fantasy land" and insisted that the administration was sticking to the diplomatic track in its dealings with Tehran.

Yet when asked whether he had directed the military's Joint Staff or Central Command to update or refine the contingencies the military is preparing for Iran, Mr. Rumsfeld bristled. "The last thing I'm going to do," he said, "is to start telling you or anyone else in the press or the world at what point we refresh a plan or don't refresh a plan, and why. It just isn't useful."

He said he had yet to hear expert opinion from government analysts about what Iran's declaration a few hours earlier meant.

Mr. Rumsfeld was nearly alone among administration officials in saying anything about the issue publicly. Others throughout the government, and even some outsiders who maintain close ties to those in authority, had to be promised anonymity before they would talk about the nuances of military planning.

Some officials, from a range of agencies including the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Central Command, which oversees military operations in the Middle East, said there was none of the feverish planning that took place in the prelude to the Iraq war, and no indication that the White House was seeking an explanation of its military options.

"The strike plans have been in place for some time," said one former senior Pentagon official who is in close touch with his former colleagues.

Tactically, eliminating Iran's nuclear sites, experts say, would require 600 to 1,000 air sorties to make sure that underground sites were destroyed.

Strategically, the task would be more enormous, because the United States would have to be prepared to stop Iran from interfering with oil shipments coming out of the Gulf, to cut off terrorist attacks, and to keep Iran from inciting uprisings in southern Iraq.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a foreign diplomat who visited her recently that to use military force to eliminate Iran's nuclear sites would be an extraordinarily difficult task; President Bush all but dismissed it as a near-term option to some lawmakers who, on condition of anonymity, relayed the essence of their discussion.

According to current and retired senior military officers and Pentagon officials, the military options against Iran range from a limited overnight strike by cruise missiles or stealth bombers aimed at nuclear-related activities, to a much larger series of attacks over several days against not only nuclear-related sites, but also other government targets, including the country's Revolutionary Guard and its intelligence headquarters.

Iran's large uranium-enrichment complex at Natanz, including an unfinished hall for 50,000 nuclear centrifuges that sits empty more than 50 feet underground, could be destroyed with earth-penetrating conventional bombs. Its conversion facility at Isfahan is above ground and easier to hit.

But senior officers warned that attacking targets in Iran would be much more difficult than the air campaign against Iraq in 2003. Iran's air defenses are more formidable. Many nuclear-related targets are dispersed across the country or buried deep underground. And United States intelligence analysts acknowledge that they do not know where all of Iran's secret nuclear-related activities are situated.

"Iran poses a very difficult target set," said one former top officer who was involved in target planning. "It's a bigger country, with more rugged terrain. It would be very difficult to take down."

Those officers and Pentagon officials, as well as independent military specialists, emphasized that there were no indications that airstrikes or commando attacks were imminent, and that any military action would most likely unleash a series of retaliatory strikes from Tehran.

"The consequences of U.S. strikes are enormous," concludes a new report by Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. Al-Rodhan of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

The report, released Friday, warned that Iran could retaliate by firing missiles at United States troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, by using proxy groups in Iraq to attack American soldiers there, and by sending suicide bombers to the United States.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/12/world/middleeast/12policy.html>

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Washington Post

April 12, 2006

Pg. 1

Lacking Biolabs, Trailers Carried Case For War

Administration Pushed Notion of Banned Iraqi Weapons Despite Evidence to Contrary

By Joby Warrick, Washington Post Staff Writer

On May 29, 2003, 50 days after the fall of Baghdad, President Bush proclaimed a fresh victory for his administration in Iraq: Two small trailers captured by U.S. and Kurdish troops had turned out to be long-sought mobile "biological laboratories." He declared, "We have found the weapons of mass destruction."

The claim, repeated by top administration officials for months afterward, was hailed at the time as a vindication of the decision to go to war. But even as Bush spoke, U.S. intelligence officials possessed powerful evidence that it was not true.

A secret fact-finding mission to Iraq -- not made public until now -- had already concluded that the trailers had nothing to do with biological weapons. Leaders of the Pentagon-sponsored mission transmitted their unanimous findings to Washington in a field report on May 27, 2003, two days before the president's statement.

The three-page field report and a 122-page final report three weeks later were stamped "secret" and shelved. Meanwhile, for nearly a year, administration and intelligence officials continued to publicly assert that the trailers were weapons factories.

The authors of the reports were nine U.S. and British civilian experts -- scientists and engineers with extensive experience in all the technical fields involved in making bioweapons -- who were dispatched to Baghdad by the Defense Intelligence Agency for an analysis of the trailers. Their actions and findings were described to a Washington Post reporter in interviews with six government officials and weapons experts who participated in the mission or had direct knowledge of it.

None would consent to being identified by name because of fear that their jobs would be jeopardized. Their accounts were verified by other current and former government officials knowledgeable about the mission. The contents of the final report, "Final Technical Engineering Exploitation Report on Iraqi Suspected Biological Weapons-Associated Trailers," remain classified. But interviews reveal that the technical team was unequivocal in its conclusion that the trailers were not intended to manufacture biological weapons. Those interviewed took care not to discuss the classified portions of their work.

"There was no connection to anything biological," said one expert who studied the trailers. Another recalled an epithet that came to be associated with the trailers: "the biggest sand toilets in the world."

Primary Piece of Evidence

The story of the technical team and its reports adds a new dimension to the debate over the U.S. government's handling of intelligence related to banned Iraqi weapons programs. The trailers -- along with aluminum tubes acquired by Iraq for what was claimed to be a nuclear weapons program -- were primary pieces of evidence offered by the Bush administration before the war to support its contention that Iraq was making weapons of mass destruction.

Intelligence officials and the White House have repeatedly denied allegations that intelligence was hyped or manipulated in the run-up to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003. But officials familiar with the technical team's reports are questioning anew whether intelligence agencies played down or dismissed postwar evidence that contradicted the administration's public views about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Last year, a presidential commission on intelligence failures criticized U.S. spy agencies for discounting evidence that contradicted the official line about banned weapons in Iraq, both before and after the invasion.

Spokesmen for the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency declined to comment on the specific findings of the technical report because it remains classified. A spokesman for the DIA asserted that the team's findings were neither ignored nor suppressed, but were incorporated in the work of the Iraqi Survey Group, which led the official search for Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The survey group's final report in September 2004 -- 15 months after the technical report was written -- said the trailers were "impractical" for biological weapons production and were "almost certainly intended" for manufacturing hydrogen for weather balloons.

"Whether the information was offered to others in the political realm I cannot say," said the DIA official, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified.

Intelligence analysts involved in high-level discussions about the trailers noted that the technical team was among several groups that analyzed the suspected mobile labs throughout the spring and summer of 2003. Two teams of military experts who viewed the trailers soon after their discovery concluded that the facilities were weapons labs, a finding that strongly influenced views of intelligence officials in Washington, the analysts said. "It was hotly debated, and there were experts making arguments on both sides," said one former senior official who spoke on the condition that he not be identified.

The technical team's findings had no apparent impact on the intelligence agencies' public statements on the trailers. A day after the team's report was transmitted to Washington -- May 28, 2003 -- the CIA publicly released its first formal assessment of the trailers, reflecting the views of its Washington analysts. That white paper, which also bore the DIA seal, contended that U.S. officials were "confident" that the trailers were used for "mobile biological weapons production."

Throughout the summer and fall of 2003, the trailers became simply "mobile biological laboratories" in speeches and press statements by administration officials. In late June, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell declared that the "confidence level is increasing" that the trailers were intended for biowarfare. In September, Vice President Cheney pronounced the trailers to be "mobile biological facilities," and said they could have been used to produce anthrax or smallpox.

By autumn, leaders of the Iraqi Survey Group were publicly expressing doubts about the trailers in news reports. David Kay, the group's first leader, told Congress on Oct. 2 that he had found no banned weapons in Iraq and was unable to verify the claim that the disputed trailers were weapons labs. Still, as late as February 2004, then-CIA Director George J. Tenet continued to assert that the mobile-labs theory remained plausible. Although there was "no

consensus" among intelligence officials, the trailers "could be made to work" as weapons labs, he said in a speech Feb. 5.

Tenet, now a faculty member at Georgetown's Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, declined to comment for this story.

Kay, in an interview, said senior CIA officials had advised him upon accepting the survey group's leadership in June 2003 that some experts in the DIA were "backsliding" on whether the trailers were weapons labs. But Kay said he was not apprised of the technical team's findings until late 2003, near the end of his time as the group's leader.

"If I had known that we had such a team in Iraq," Kay said, "I would certainly have given their findings more weight."

A Defector's Tales

Even before the trailers were seized in spring 2003, the mobile labs had achieved mythic stature. As early as the mid-1990s, weapons inspectors from the United Nations chased phantom mobile labs that were said to be mounted on trucks or rail cars, churning out tons of anthrax by night and moving to new locations each day. No such labs were found, but many officials believed the stories, thanks in large part to elaborate tales told by Iraqi defectors. The CIA's star informant, an Iraqi with the code name Curveball, was a self-proclaimed chemical engineer who defected to Germany in 1999 and requested asylum. For four years, the Baghdad native passed secrets about alleged Iraqi banned weapons to the CIA indirectly, through Germany's intelligence service. Curveball provided descriptions of mobile labs and said he had supervised work in one of them. He even described a catastrophic 1998 accident in one lab that left 12 Iraqis dead.

Curveball's detailed descriptions -- which were officially discredited in 2004 -- helped CIA artists create color diagrams of the labs, which Powell later used to argue the case for military intervention in Iraq before the U.N. Security Council.

"We have firsthand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and on rails," Powell said in the Feb. 5, 2003, speech. Thanks to those descriptions, he said, "We know what the fermenters look like. We know what the tanks, pumps, compressors and other parts look like."

The trailers discovered in the Iraqi desert resembled the drawings well enough, at least from a distance. One of them, a flatbed trailer covered by tarps, was found in April by Kurdish fighters near the northern city of Irbil. The second was captured by U.S. forces near Mosul. Both were painted military green and outfitted with a suspicious array of gear: large metal tanks, motors, compressors, pipes and valves.

Photos of the trailers were quickly circulated, and many weapons experts were convinced that the long-sought mobile labs had been found.

Yet reaction from Iraqi sources was troublingly inconsistent. Curveball, shown photos of the trailers, confirmed they were mobile labs and even pointed out key features. But other Iraqi informants in internal reports disputed Curveball's story and claimed the trailers had a benign purpose: producing hydrogen for weather balloons.

Back at the Pentagon, DIA officials attempted a quick resolution of the dispute. The task fell to the "Jefferson Project," a DIA-led initiative made up of government and civilian technical experts who specialize in analyzing and countering biological threats. Project leaders put together a team of volunteers, eight Americans and a Briton, each with at least a decade of experience in one of the essential technical skills needed for bioweapons production. All were nongovernment employees working for defense contractors or the Energy Department's national labs.

The technical team was assembled in Kuwait and then flown to Baghdad to begin their work early on May 25, 2003. By that date, the two trailers had been moved to a military base on the grounds of one of deposed president Saddam Hussein's Baghdad palaces. When members of the technical team arrived, they found the trailers parked in an open lot, covered with camouflage netting.

The technical team went to work under a blistering sun in 110-degree temperatures. Using tools from home, they peered into vats, turned valves, tapped gauges and measured pipes. They reconstructed a flow-path through feed tanks and reactor vessels, past cooling chambers and drain valves, and into discharge tanks and exhaust pipes. They took hundreds of photographs.

By the end of their first day, team members still had differing views about what the trailers were. But they agreed about what the trailers were not.

"Within the first four hours," said one team member, who like the others spoke on the condition he not be named, "it was clear to everyone that these were not biological labs."

News of the team's early impressions leaped across the Atlantic well ahead of the technical report. Over the next two days, a stream of anxious e-mails and phone calls from Washington pressed for details and clarifications.

The reason for the nervousness was soon obvious: In Washington, a CIA analyst had written a draft white paper on the trailers, an official assessment that would also reflect the views of the DIA. The white paper described the trailers as "the strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program." It also explicitly

rejected an explanation by Iraqi officials, described in a New York Times article a few days earlier, that the trailers might be mobile units for producing hydrogen.

But the technical team's preliminary report, written in a tent in Baghdad and approved by each team member, reached a conclusion opposite from that of the white paper.

Key Components Lacking

Team members and other sources intimately familiar with the mission declined to discuss technical details of the team's findings because the report remains classified. But they cited the Iraqi Survey Group's nonclassified, final report to Congress in September 2004 as reflecting the same conclusions.

That report said the trailers were "impractical for biological agent production," lacking 11 components that would be crucial for making bioweapons. Instead, the trailers were "almost certainly designed and built for the generation of hydrogen," the survey group reported.

The group's report and members of the technical team also dismissed the notion that the trailers could be easily modified to produce weapons.

"It would be easier to start all over with just a bucket," said Rod Barton, an Australian biological weapons expert and former member of the survey group.

The technical team's preliminary report was transmitted in the early hours of May 27, just before its members began boarding planes to return home. Within 24 hours, the CIA published its white paper, "Iraqi Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants," on its Web site.

After team members returned to Washington, they began work on a final report. At several points, members were questioned about revising their conclusions, according to sources knowledgeable about the conversations. The questioners generally wanted to know the same thing: Could the report's conclusions be softened, to leave open a possibility that the trailers might have been intended for weapons?

In the end, the final report -- 19 pages plus a 103-page appendix -- remained unequivocal in declaring the trailers unsuitable for weapons production.

"It was very assertive," said one weapons expert familiar with the report's contents.

Then, their mission completed, the team members returned to their jobs and watched as their work appeared to vanish.

"I went home and fully expected that our findings would be publicly stated," one member recalled. "It never happened. And I just had to live with it."

Researcher Alice Crites contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/11/AR2006041101888.html>

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Christian Science Monitor

April 12, 2006

Pg. 1

Is Iran Next? The Calculus Of Military Strike

Tehran has raised the stakes, saying it is enriching uranium.

By Mark Sappenfield, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON -- Time and again this week, President Bush and his team reiterated their position on Iran's nuclear program: America wants a diplomatic solution, and any suggestion it is moving toward an inevitable strike on Iran is "wild speculation."

At the same time, however, Mr. Bush has remained steadfast in his statements that a nuclear Iran is unacceptable and "no option is off the table" to prevent it.

The news Tuesday that Iran is now producing enriched uranium for atomic reactors - considered a first step toward nuclear weapons - has heightened the sense that America and Iran are on a collision course. A new article in The New Yorker claims that the administration is again on a path to war.

Yet amid the tumult is an effort to shape a debate that's more robust than the one before the Iraq war. While military action doesn't appear certain, the hint of it raises questions on the use of force, and what it might - and might not - accomplish.

It seems likely that precision airstrikes could set Iran's nuclear program back at least a year and perhaps several.

Whether that delay is worth the probable consequences - the strengthening of a despotic regime within Iran and the increased likelihood of terrorism in nearby Iraq and the broader region - is what's at issue.

"The military option has a lot of costs," says Michael Rubin, an Iran expert at the American Enterprise Institute here.

"But is the cost of the Islamic Republic of Iran having a nuclear weapon greater?"

Iran closer to nuclear weapon

Reports out of Iran Tuesday suggested that the country has moved closer to being able to produce a nuclear weapon. Tuesday's announcement claimed that Iran now has 164 centrifuges, which yield more-concentrated uranium. Iran would need thousands of centrifuges to produce enough fuel for a nuclear weapon - and the country's leaders insist that the program is solely for nuclear power - but it is a concern for international officials.

Few security analysts think Iran would actually use a nuclear weapon against the United States. It is an established nation motivated by self-preservation as much as power.

Indeed, Iran's terrorist links are capable of causing much more damage than they do.

But Iran does not desire to prompt the US or Israel to a major response, says Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations. "If Iran used a nuclear weapon against New York - or if it could be traced back to Iran - Tehran would fall ... and the Iranians know that."

More likely, Iran would ratchet up its terrorist activities, knowing that enemies would be less inclined to retaliate strongly against a nuclear foe. For Dr. Rubin, that still makes a military strike "the lesser of two evils" if diplomatic efforts fail.

With the United States Army fully engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, airstrikes against Iran's nuclear facilities are the most likely option. The operation might take five days, says retired Air Force Col. Sam Gardiner, who participated in a war game on the subject in late 2004.

Some sites, like the centrifuge facility in Natanz, are obvious and would be relatively easy to target. Others are less known or more deeply buried, leading to speculation that the United States might use special nuclear weapons designed to penetrate deep into fortified bunkers.

While that remains a possibility, Jack Straw, the British foreign secretary, called the suggestion "completely nuts," and analysts agree it would be disastrous for American interests in Middle East.

The use of conventional weapons is problematic enough. Not only do experts like Colonel Gardiner question whether America could locate and destroy all the relevant targets, but they also wonder whether even a successful attack is worth the cost.

"None of [the military options] are any good," says Gardiner.

No matter how precise or limited, any airstrike against Iran is likely to be perceived there as a declaration of war.

"There is a tendency to think of it as a quick, surgical action short of war," says Dr. Biddle. "That is a mistake."

Surely, Iran would retaliate through a more aggressive terrorism campaign, he and others say, and with US troops close at hand in Iraq, they could become the first targets. Iran could also try to close the narrow Strait of Hormuz - through which all Persian Gulf traffic, including oil tankers, must pass.

Iran's internal strife

In some ways, though, the greatest effect could be within Iran itself. For years, a younger generation seeking democratic reforms has struggled against Iran's government of autocratic clerics, who espouse the destruction of America and Israel.

Yet unlike Iraq, a splintered country that was essentially the creation of British imperialism, Iran has a national history stretching back thousands of years to the days of the Persians. As in any country, an attack from a foreign power would likely rally support for the government.

"Iranians are fiercely nationalistic," says Rubin.

He believes the US could mitigate that somewhat by also attacking symbols of the regime's repression, such as the ministry of information and the guard towers in the country's most infamous political prison.

Others, however, see a different lesson from history. When America helped topple Iran's government in 1953, Iranian outrage spawned the hostage crisis of 1979. Now, the US and Iran could be on a course again to poison their relations for a generation.

The concern is that the US might attack before all other options have been exhausted. Indeed, America and Iran still don't talk to each other diplomatically; they rely on Europe as a mediator.

Given that Iran is surrounded by American troops - in Afghanistan to the east and Iraq to the west - some suggest that there may still be a diplomatic way forward: A direct US offer to Iran of security guarantees for cooperation with its nuclear program.

Says Robert Hunter, a former US ambassador to NATO: "If you try and fail, at least you have a circumstance that clarifies the issue."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0412/p01s02-usfp.html>

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Los Angeles Times

April 12, 2006

U.S. Options On Confronting Iran Limited

Tehran's announcement on nuclear enrichment calls into question assumptions made in Washington about using pressure on the regime.

By Paul Richter, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — President Bush, who has defined his dealings with Iran in terms of confrontation since the early days of his administration, may have been drawn one step closer to a showdown after Tehran asserted Tuesday that it had successfully produced enriched uranium that can be used as nuclear fuel.

Through years of tough talk and veiled threats, Bush and members of his administration have been the chief proponents of ratcheting up international pressure to persuade Iran's leaders to accede to demands that they forswear atomic weapons and steer clear of nuclear enrichment work. In its new national security manifesto, the White House warned in stark terms last month that diplomatic efforts to halt Iran's nuclear program must succeed "if confrontation is to be avoided."

But Tuesday's announcement is certain to raise questions not only about Bush's approach to the Iranian nuclear issue, but also about other U.S. judgments, such as whether U.S. intelligence agencies are able to accurately assess Iran's capabilities and intentions.

U.S. officials have based their approach toward Iran on a conviction that sustained pressure from the world community would force the Iranian leadership to back down, arguing that this has long been Iran's pattern. Iran's announcement "seems to negate that idea," said Ray Takeyh, an Iran specialist at the Council on Foreign Relations.

"What they're trying to say is, 'That type of pressure isn't going to work, and we'll meet pressure with our own countermeasures,'" Takeyh said.

Bush administration officials have rejected suggestions that they negotiate directly with Iran. But they have pursued a diplomatic course from a distance, backing efforts by European negotiators while constantly criticizing Iran, refusing to disavow U.S. military options and pushing for international sanctions by the United Nations.

If that approach has proven ineffective, Bush is likely to face questions from across the political spectrum about whether a different approach — softer or harder — may have been better.

The Iranians insist their only objective is to develop a peaceful, civilian nuclear energy program. And they say they have now succeeded in enriching uranium to the concentration needed for civilian nuclear power generation. It is unclear whether they yet have the kind of mastery of the process they would need to enrich uranium on an industrial scale necessary to eventually produce nuclear weapons fuel.

Bush, for his part, has declared in the past that he wants to prevent Iran from enriching uranium even to the point necessary for civilian use, fearing that capability could lead to the ability to produce a bomb.

"Enrichment and reprocessing on Iranian soil ... is not acceptable to the international community," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said last month.

Iran's announcement appeared to be timed to convince the U.N. Security Council that there was no longer any need for the council to press the country to halt its nuclear research program. "They want to be able to present this as a *fait accompli*," Takeyh said.

Such a defiant declaration would quickly test the U.S. plan to confront Iran with a unified world response. Some countries may be galvanized to more forceful action by the Iranian news. But others, such as Russia, have already been convinced that Iran was going to gain nuclear capability sooner or later. For them, the news may further lessen their appetite for a dispute with Tehran.

Within the United States, the enrichment announcement is likely to bring a challenge to the Bush policy from conservative opponents of containment who have been urging more forceful action, fearing that the administration was taking too much time trying to build a consensus and gradually increasing pressure on Tehran.

U.S. intelligence officials have estimated that Iran is five to 10 years away from being able to develop a nuclear bomb. But even before Tuesday's announcement, Israel had estimated that Iran could gain the knowledge needed to build a bomb within the next few months. Israeli newspapers Tuesday quoted unidentified senior officials as saying that they believe Iran's claims are accurate and in line with Israel's forecasts.

Last month, staff members of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, told foreign diplomats in briefings that they believed the Iranians were moving faster than expected with their small-scale enrichment efforts. They predicted that Tehran might be able to build a bomb in three years.

"If it turns out that the Iranians have been moving a heck of a lot faster than we thought, we're going to have to consider ways to press them sooner," said Patrick Clawson, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "If it turns out that the Iranians were making a lot of progress, and our estimates were too optimistic, then we've got a problem here."

One U.S. official, however, defended the U.S. estimate, saying that Iran's most recent claims still put it years away from being capable of building a bomb. The Iranian claims and the U.S. predictions still are "broadly consistent," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity when discussing U.S. intelligence estimates.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-usiran12apr12,1,2913765.story>

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Washington Post

April 13, 2006

Pg. 18

White House Decries Report On Iraqi Trailers

By Joby Warrick, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration yesterday denounced a Washington Post report that questioned the handling of postwar intelligence on alleged Iraqi biological weapons labs. A White House spokesman acknowledged that President Bush's assertions about the suspected labs were in error but said this was caused by flawed intelligence work rather than an effort to mislead.

Bush press secretary Scott McClellan criticized the article as "reckless" for what he said was an "impression" that Bush had knowingly misled the American public about the two Iraqi trailers seized by U.S. and Kurdish fighters weeks after the Iraqi invasion began. On May 29, 2003, Bush described the trailers in a television interview as "biological laboratories" and said, "We have found the weapons of mass destruction."

The Post reported yesterday that a Pentagon-appointed team of technical experts had strongly rejected the weapons claim in a field report sent to the Defense Intelligence Agency on May 27, 2003. That report, and an authoritative, 122-page final report by the same team three weeks later, concluded that the trailers were not biological weapons labs. Both reports were classified and never released. The team's findings were ultimately supported by the Iraq Survey Group, which led the official search for banned weapons, in a report to Congress in September 2004, about 15 months later.

Whether White House officials were alerted to the technical team's finding is unclear, The Post article reported. In any case, senior administration and intelligence officials continued for months afterward to cite the trailers as evidence that Iraq had been producing weapons of mass destruction -- the chief claim used to justify the U.S.-led invasion.

McClellan dismissed the news article as "rehashing an old issue," saying Bush has repeatedly acknowledged "the intelligence was wrong." The spokesman said Bush's comments on the trailers reflected the intelligence community's dominant view at the time.

"The White House is not the intelligence-gathering agency," he said.

McClellan indicated he did not know when, or if, the White House was briefed on the technical team's report. And he declined to respond when asked if the technical team's report would be declassified and released.

Prominent Democrats demanded yesterday that the report be immediately released.

"Given that the president has been willing to declassify information for his own political purposes, he should declassify this report so the American people can know if they were misled," Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean said in a statement. "Was this incompetence, meaning that he did not know something that he clearly should have known, or is this an instance of dishonesty where information was misused or withheld to support a political agenda?"

The White House sought to further rebut the Post article with a series of "Setting the Record Straight" statements e-mailed to reporters. In the statements, the White House does not deny the existence of the technical team's report but portrays it as a preliminary finding, contrasting that report with a public white paper put out by the CIA on May 28, 2003. The CIA paper described the trailers as the "strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program."

The White House provided a "link" to a CIA Web site where the white paper is still posted, nearly 18 months after its conclusions were refuted by the Iraq Survey Group.

The White House statement also cites the 2005 Robb-Silberman commission report on intelligence failures related to Iraqi weapons. That report criticizes the intelligence agencies for "bureaucratic resistance to admitting error" as evidence showed Iraqi weapons claims to be unfounded.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/12/AR2006041201789.html>

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New York Times

April 13, 2006

Pg. 1

Analysts Say A Nuclear Iran Is Years Away

By William J. Broad, Nazila Fathi and Joel Brinkley

Western nuclear analysts said yesterday that Tehran lacked the skills, materials and equipment to make good on its immediate nuclear ambitions, even as a senior Iranian official said Iran would defy international pressure and rapidly expand its ability to enrich uranium for fuel.

The official, Muhammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's atomic energy organization, said Iran would push quickly to put 54,000 centrifuges on line — a vast increase from the 164 the Iranians said Tuesday that they had used to enrich uranium to levels that could fuel a nuclear reactor.

Still, nuclear analysts called the claims exaggerated. They said nothing had changed to alter current estimates of when Iran might be able to make a single nuclear weapon, assuming that is its ultimate goal. The United States government has put that at 5 to 10 years, and some analysts have said it could come as late as 2020.

Iran's announcement brought criticism from several Western nations and to a lesser degree from Russia and China. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called for "strong steps" against Iran, using the country's clear statement of defiance to persuade reluctant countries like Russia and China to support tough international penalties. But Russian officials said they had not changed their opposition to such penalties. Nuclear analysts said Iran's boast that it had enriched uranium using 164 centrifuges meant that it had now moved one small but significant step beyond what it had been ready to do nearly three years ago, when it agreed to suspend enrichment while negotiating the fate of its nuclear program.

"They're hyping it," said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington, a private group that monitors the Iranian nuclear program. Anthony H. Cordesman and Khalid R. al-Rodhan of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington called the new Iranian claims "little more than vacuous political posturing" meant to promote Iranian nationalism and a global sense of atomic inevitability.

The nuclear experts said Iran's claim yesterday that it would mass-produce 54,000 centrifuges echoed boasts that it made years ago. Even so, they noted, the Islamic state still lacked the parts and materials to make droves of the highly complex machines, which can spin uranium into fuel rich enough for use in nuclear reactors or atom bombs. It took Tehran 21 years of planning and 7 years of sporadic experiments, mostly in secret, to reach its current ability to link 164 spinning centrifuges in what nuclear experts call a cascade. Now, the analysts said, Tehran has to achieve not only consistent results around the clock for many months and years but even higher degrees of precision and mass production. It is as if Iran, having mastered a difficult musical instrument, now faces the challenge of making thousands of them and creating a very large orchestra that always plays in tune and in unison.

Yesterday, Mr. Saeedi, the Iranian nuclear official, said Iran was moving rapidly toward its atomic goals. "We will expand uranium enrichment to industrial scale at Natanz," he was quoted as saying by the ISNA student news agency in a reference to Iran's main enrichment facility. Mr. Saeedi said Iran would start operating the first of 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz by late 2006, with further expansion to 54,000 centrifuges. "We have no problem in doing that," he told ISNA. "We just need to increase our production lines."

The news from Iran, which holds 10 percent of the world's oil reserves, has made oil markets very nervous in recent days and contributed to a spike in oil prices to nearly \$70 a barrel on Tuesday. Oil futures on the New York Mercantile Exchange closed at \$68.62 a barrel yesterday, just \$2 short of their record after Hurricane Katrina. Since the beginning of the year, the diplomatic crisis has prompted fears that Iran might be tempted to restrict its oil sales, provoking a price jump that would cause economic havoc around the world. Iranian officials have repeatedly said they might use their country's "oil weapon" in a confrontation with the West. But, as is often the case in Iranian politics, such statements were just as rapidly offset by more reassuring comments from the Oil Ministry that Iran would not use its oil exports as a bargaining chip with the West.

More realistically, many traders fear that any international penalties against Iran might hurt Iran's oil industry, slow investments, or remove sorely needed barrels from oil-hungry markets.

The Russian stance against penalties highlighted the obstacles Washington faces in its effort to force a halt to Iran's nuclear program. A senior aide to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia said yesterday that any effort to employ broad penalties against Tehran would backfire because "Iran's current president will use them for his benefit, and he will use them to consolidate public opinion around him."

The United States is urging members of the United Nations Security Council to approve travel and financial restrictions on Iran's leaders, and administration officials view Russia, which has close trade ties to Iran, as the linchpin of those efforts.

Ms. Rice said yesterday that the Security Council must consider "strong steps" to induce Iran to change course. "The Security Council will need to take into consideration this move by Iran," she said about Tuesday's announcement. "It will be time when it reconvenes on this case for strong steps to make certain that we maintain the credibility of the international community."

In Iran on Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced in an elaborate ceremony that Iranian scientists had enriched uranium to 3.5 percent — a level of purity that, if enough could be made, might fuel a nuclear reactor. While Iran hailed the step as a first, the nuclear experts said Tehran had in fact been doing periodic enrichment experiments with centrifuges for seven years, since 1999.

Amid the tensions, Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, arrived in Tehran yesterday for talks with Iranian nuclear officials. Despite the provocative nature of Iran's statements, he still held out hope that the government could be persuaded to compromise. "We hope to convince Iran to take confidence-building measures including suspension of uranium enrichment activities until outstanding issues are clarified," Dr. ElBaradei told journalists at the Tehran airport, Reuters reported.

Iran's state-run television was dominated by programs about the atomic claim in what seemed like an organized effort to mobilize public support for the nuclear program. One channel showed a reporter stopping people on the street to ask if they had bought pastry to celebrate the news. Another showed nuclear sites and uranium mines. Television news said schools celebrated the success and rebroadcast the announcement of Iran's president hailing the enrichment step.

While Iran has sharply raised its atomic claims in the past two days, nuclear analysts said it appeared to be roughly where it was expected to be on the road to learning how to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, and still had years of work ahead of it to attain its ambitious goals.

Mr. Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security said he was not surprised that the Iranians had got a group of 164 centrifuges up and running and had begun to introduce uranium gas into them for enrichment. "There's still a lot they have to do," he said, to perfect the operation of the cascade of centrifuges. A report that he and his colleagues made public late last month suggested that Iran would need 6 to 12 months to master that process, and Mr. Albright said in an interview that he stood by that rough estimate as accurate.

His March report said Iran had parts for perhaps 1,000 or 2,000 centrifuges beyond the ones already in operation, and that Iran is not likely to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon until 2009 at the earliest.

Several Western nations criticized Iran's recent announcements as needlessly provocative.

Foreign Minister Jack Straw of Britain said they were "deeply unhelpful," and his German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said Iran was "going in precisely the wrong direction." Russia and China joined the chorus, but their criticisms were qualified.

"For China, we are concerned about the events and the way things are developing," said Wang Guangya, China's ambassador to the United Nations. But he added, "In spite of this, I believe diplomatic efforts are still under way." In Moscow, a Foreign Ministry spokesman called Iran's push to expand uranium enrichment "a step in the wrong direction."

But Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov later tempered that. He inveighed against any possible military action against Iran and advised against a rush to judgment, saying Iran had "never stated that it is striving to possess nuclear weapons."

Jad Mouawad contributed reporting from New York for this article.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/13/world/middleeast/13iran.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Lexington (KY) Herald-Leader

April 13, 2006

Chemical Weapons Deadline Won't Be Met

Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld confirms in a letter that the United States will not meet the deadline for destruction of its chemical weapons. The letter, obtained by the Berea-based Chemical Weapons Working Group, was sent Monday to leaders of the House and Senate Armed Services committees. Under an international treaty, the United States has until April 2012 to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, including the 523 tons of nerve and blister agent stored at Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond. About two-thirds of the stockpile will be destroyed by April 2012, the letter says. Rumsfeld said every effort will be made to complete destruction as close to the deadline as possible. This is the first time the Defense Department has publicly stated its reservations about its ability to fulfill the treaty.

<http://www.kentucky.com/mld/kentucky/news/local/14330772.htm>

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Washington Times
April 13, 2006
Pg. B3

More Workers Exposed To Chemicals In Lab

For a second consecutive day, employees of a research laboratory at Aberdeen Proving Ground were being monitored yesterday for exposure to dangerous chemicals after a brief power outage.

Aberdeen Proving Ground spokesman George Mercer said yesterday's outage occurred shortly before 2 p.m. at a laboratory operated by the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, an organization that does chemical and biological research for the Defense Department.

Three employees suffered possible exposure to small amounts of several chemicals, including hydrogen cyanide; G-B, a nerve agent; and mustard, a blister agent. Mr. Mercer said the employees were under observation but haven't shown any symptoms.

The outage affected only a few laboratories in a single building at the Edgewood complex, and there was no apparent connection to an outage Tuesday at another laboratory complex that caused 15 persons to be monitored for exposure to chemicals.

http://www.washtimes.com/metro/20060413-125820-2322r_page2.htm

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Washington Post
April 13, 2006
Pg. 18

Analysis

Iran's Defiance Narrows U.S. Options For Response

By Peter Baker, Washington Post Staff Writer

As Iran takes a step closer to developing nuclear capacity, President Bush finds his options ever more constricted. The Iranians seem unfazed by U.N. statements. The Russians and Chinese won't go along with economic sanctions. And the generals at the Pentagon hate the idea of a military strike.

The White House declared yesterday that "it is time for action" by the U.N. Security Council, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called on it to take "strong steps" to force Tehran to abandon uranium enrichment. But even as Europeans, Russians and Chinese expressed disapproval of Iran's latest move, there were no signs of consensus on what to do about it.

The central problem for Bush, according to aides and analysts, is that Iran has proved impervious so far to the diplomatic levers Washington and its partners have been willing to use. Some administration officials have grown increasingly skeptical that a solution can be found, raising the prospect that, like North Korea before it, a second member of the trio of rogue states Bush once dubbed the "axis of evil" may ultimately develop a nuclear bomb over U.S. objections.

Bush is especially frustrated with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has abandoned negotiations with the Europeans and defied international pressure while talking of wiping Israel "off the map." Bush's chief political adviser, Karl Rove, complained during an appearance yesterday in Houston that it is hard to find a diplomatic resolution because Ahmadinejad "is not a rational human being."

That has left Bush with few attractive alternatives. "At this point, your options seem to be not good and scarce," said Ray Takeyh, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "Your other option is living with it . . . and I think that's what will happen."

"Their Plan A is to put incremental pressure on Iran so it will cave," said retired Air Force Col. P.J. Crowley, a National Security Council aide under President Bill Clinton who now works at the liberal Center for American Progress. "And there is no Plan B."

Iran escalated the standoff by announcing that it has enriched uranium in a 164-centrifuge network to 3.5 percent. If true, the achievement would be a milestone but not one that necessarily makes a bomb imminent. Iran has insisted it wants nuclear energy for civilian purposes. Weapons-grade uranium would have to be enriched to at least 80 percent and would need thousands of centrifuges operating in tandem.

Iran reiterated yesterday that it plans to construct 3,000 centrifuges at its facility in Natanz within a year and declared it would eventually expand to 54,000. Making so many centrifuges work together is especially tricky, according to scientists. Acting Assistant Secretary of State Stephen G. Rademaker told reporters in Moscow yesterday that, once built, a 3,000-centrifuge cascade could produce enough highly enriched uranium to build a bomb within 271 days. A 50,000-centrifuge cascade, he said, would need 16 days to yield enough fissile material.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, headed to Tehran, and his inspectors are expected to report on whether the Iranian claims are true. But the announcement electrified the diplomatic circuit and highlighted the challenge to Bush. British, French and German officials all criticized Iran for "going in precisely the wrong direction," as German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier put it. Russia and China also called the development unwelcome but still resisted a tough U.N. response.

Andrei Denisov, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, counseled restraint and said "it is not high time" to reach a judgment about Iran's ultimate nuclear aims. In an interview, Denisov said Moscow is concerned about reports that the Bush administration is studying military options and remains skeptical of sanctions. "We don't like sanctions, we don't like imposing any forceful settlement. It must be political and diplomatic."

The Security Council in a presidential statement last month gave Iran 30 days to suspend uranium enrichment, a deadline that expires April 28, but it threatened no consequences if Tehran disobeys. Rice said yesterday that the latest announcement means the council must do more to enforce its will.

"I do think that the Security Council will need to take into consideration this move by Iran and that it will be time when it reconvenes on this case for strong steps to make certain we maintain the credibility of the international community," she said. White House press secretary Scott McClellan would not discuss those steps, "but you can be assured that it needs to be more than just a presidential statement at this point."

U.S. Ambassador John R. Bolton suggested that the council consider a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N. charter making its demand legally binding. "It's clear that by announcing not only the enrichment activity, but by contending they're prepared to go all the way to . . . 50,000 centrifuges, the Iranians are expressing their disdain for the Security Council," he said.

Diplomats from the United States, Europe, Russia and China agreed yesterday to meet about Iran next Tuesday on the sidelines of a scheduled Moscow meeting of nations in the Group of Eight. In the meantime, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan urged all sides "to cool down on the rhetoric and not to escalate."

Analysts said Iranian officials may have made the announcement to respond to the reports on U.S. military options, in effect saying airstrikes would not stop their program because they now possess enough knowledge to reincorporate it.

Bush has dismissed suggestions of airstrikes as "wild speculation" and emphasized diplomacy. If he cannot persuade Russia and China to toughen U.N. pressure on Iran, though, he has few options, analysts said. He could organize economic sanctions with a "coalition of the willing" in tandem with the Europeans. Or he could offer Iran a more substantive deal.

Richard N. Haass, a former top Bush State Department official, proposed a package in which Iran would be allowed "very limited enrichment" subject to inspection and in exchange be given economic benefits and security guarantees. If Iran violated the terms, he said on the Web site of the Council on Foreign Relations, where he is president, the deal would spell out consequences including sanctions and "conceivably military force."

"We've been trying coercive diplomacy and the Iranians have just sent a very clear message: 'Nice try, it just won't work,'" said Clifford Kupchan, an analyst at the Eurasia Group. "The only diplomatic option we haven't tried" is to cut a deal directly. "We might as well try putting everything on the table."

Staff writer Colum Lynch at the United Nations contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/12/AR2006041201967.html>

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Washington Times

April 13, 2006

Pg. 1

Russia, China Slam Iran's Nuke Plans

From combined dispatches

TEHRAN -- The world's leading powers, including Russia and China, joined the United States in expressing heightened concern yesterday over Iran's advancing its nuclear program in defiance of the United Nations. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in Washington, urged the U.N. Security Council to take unspecified "strong steps" to preserve its credibility. The Russian government repeated its assertion that force could not resolve the dispute.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John R. Bolton went in more detail than Miss Rice, saying that Washington would seek a Chapter 7 resolution at the council. The chapter deals with threats to peace and allows the use of military force as a response.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Tuesday that Iran for the first time had succeeded in enriching uranium on a small scale, a key step in generating fuel for a reactor or fissile material for a bomb. He warned

yesterday that forcing Iran to suspend its enrichment program would "cause everlasting hatred in the hearts of Iranians."

The U.N. Security Council has set April 28 as a deadline for Tehran to halt enrichment activity, although no consequences have been specified.

Miss Rice reiterated those demands yesterday.

"This is not a question of Iran's right to civil nuclear power. ... The world does not believe that Iran should have the capability and the technology that could lead to a nuclear weapon," she said, during a welcoming ceremony for President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea in Washington.

Asked whether the council would impose sanctions on Iran, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said, "That's a possibility as well, that's one option that's available."

Russia and China, key players to the Iran issue with veto rights at the Security Council, have thus far opposed sanctions. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said yesterday that the use of force was no answer to the standoff with Iran.

"If such plans exist, they will not be able to solve this problem. On the contrary, they could create a dangerous explosive blaze in the Middle East, where there are already enough blazes," he said.

Russia and China rejected a Chapter 7 resolution yesterday, indicating that they are not ready to condemn Iran as a threat to international peace and security. "There is no reason for punitive measures yet," Russian Ambassador Andrei Denisov said at the United Nations.

"There is no evidence of noncompliance with the nonproliferation [treaty]."

Representatives of several key council members said yesterday that they do not intend to hold substantive discussions until after they read an upcoming report by Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N. oversight agency.

Upon arrival in Tehran late yesterday, Mr. ElBaradei said he hoped to persuade Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activities.

"We hope to convince Iran to take confidence-building measures including suspension of uranium enrichment activities until outstanding issues are clarified," he told journalists at the Tehran airport.

"I would like to see Iran come to terms with the request of the international community."

The IAEA chief is scheduled to inspect the site where Iran claims to have enriched uranium in a laboratory by using 164 centrifuges.

Iran signaled its resolve to continue enrichment yesterday. "We will expand uranium enrichment to industrial scale at Natanz," Iranian Deputy Nuclear Chief Mohammad Saeedi told state-run television.

Mr. Saeedi said using 54,000 centrifuges will be able to produce enough enriched uranium to provide fuel for a 1,000-megawatt nuclear power plant like one Russia is finishing in southern Iran.

Scientists say that many centrifuges could produce enough uranium for more than a dozen atomic bombs each year.

Iranian Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi, the armed forces joint chief of staff, said yesterday, "When a people master nuclear technology and nuclear fuel, nothing can be done against them. The West can do nothing and is obliged to extend to us the hand of friendship."

An IAEA diplomat in Vienna, Austria, where the IAEA is based, said U.N. inspectors would brief Mr. ElBaradei on their recent findings at Iranian nuclear sites and on Iran's claim to have enriched uranium by 3.5 percent, a level needed to fuel a nuclear reactor. "This will guide him in his discussions with Iranian leaders," he said.

Mr. ElBaradei will reiterate to Iran recent calls by the IAEA and the Security Council for a halt to all enrichment work, and seek answers to IAEA queries for his next report to the council.

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan urged all parties to return to talks and "cool down the rhetoric." Three European states behind a deal to suspend enrichment, which broke down last year, weighed in with criticism of Iran.

British Foreign Minister Jack Straw said the announcement was "deeply unhelpful" and undermined confidence. His German counterpart, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, said Iran was "going in precisely the wrong direction." French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy called it "a worrying step" and Iran should stop its "dangerous activities."

Betsy Pisik contributed to this report from New York.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060413-121845-5181r.htm>

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Time.com

April 12, 2006

Spy Chief: CIA Detainees Will Be Held Indefinitely

Exclusive: John Negroponte says accused Al-Qaeda members will remain in secret prisons as long as 'war on terror continues'

By Michael Duffy and Timothy J. Burger, Washington

John Negroponte has seen his share of tribal warfare. As the top U.S. official in Baghdad in 2004, Negroponte spent more than a year trying to transform long-standing and often violent resentments between Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds into a shared desire to form a new democratic government in Iraq.

That experience was just one reason Negroponte seemed the right man to take on a just-as-impossible task when he came home last summer: convincing three secretive, self-protecting and hidebound Washington tribes — the FBI, the CIA and the Pentagon — to put aside their differences and work together to avoid the kind of intelligence failures that have beset the U.S. in the last decade. The job came with a new title — Director of National Intelligence — and impressive but hardly unlimited new powers.

Negroponte's first year has been challenging, to say the least. TIME spent several weeks talking to current and former U.S. officials from the intelligence agencies, on Capitol Hill and in the DNI's office itself about the progress made since Negroponte was confirmed as the nation's intelligence czar a year ago. Progress has been made, most experts agree, but it is difficult to measure. Each of the agencies Negroponte is trying to get in harness has at times dragged — or is still dragging — its feet. And few of the reform's original authors are satisfied with the pace of the change. "We have had a bit of a slow start at the DNI," said Rep. Jane Harman, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Agency. "There have been a number of disappointments."

In an exclusive interview, Negroponte, a career diplomat who has been a senior White House official and a U.N. ambassador, told TIME that the intelligence is "improving and we intend to improve it some more. We're off to a good start. But I don't want to make exaggerated claims here because this is a job that's going to take some time." Nor did Negroponte exaggerate the claims about the quality of U.S. intelligence on Iran, which this week announced that it is accelerating its production of enriched uranium, which Western countries fear is a step on the road to building nuclear weapons. Negroponte told TIME the U.S. had good but not perfect intelligence on the state of Iranian nuclear facilities. "Certainly, we know where the key installations are. Are there others that we're not aware of at all? You don't know what you don't know."

Negroponte also told TIME that three dozen or so of the worst al-Qaeda terrorists held in secret CIA prisons are likely to remain in captivity as long as the "war on terror continues." He added, "These people are being held. And they're bad actors. And as long as this situation continues, this war on terror continues, I'm not sure I can tell you what the ultimate disposition of those detainees will be." Negroponte's comments appear to be the first open acknowledgement of the secret U.S. detention system and the fact that captives such as Khalid Shaikh Mohammad — involved in Sept. 11 or other major attacks on U.S. interests around the world — may be held indefinitely. Before Congress created the super spook's job in late 2004, America's intelligence system was verging on dysfunction. Too many agencies were doing too many unrelated missions. Intelligence officers were hostile to the concept of information sharing; each agency had its own procedures for tradecraft, hiring, promotion and discipline. There was far too much overlap in some areas and huge gaps in others. Human intelligence — agents stealing secrets — had fallen into decline while often useful public information was considered unreliable. Most worrisome of all, and perhaps as a consequence, the intelligence itself was often poor; first on the warning signs before 9/11 and then on their assessment in 2002 that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Both were massive intelligence failures for which no senior officials were fired, or even punished.

The question now is: What has changed? Negroponte started at the top: U.S. officials point first to a more careful and conditioned and "painstaking" President's Daily Brief, or PDB. "Rather than saying, 'Country X has system Y,' we say, 'A source over whom we have some control who has second-hand knowledge, second-hand access to this information, reports that...'" There is a much higher tolerance for ambiguity," explained Deputy Director Michael Hayden. Added Kenneth Brill, director of the DNI's new National Counterproliferation Center: "If there is a disagreement, we flag it."

DNI officials also say a new "open source" center near Reston, Virginia, where analysts sift through information that comes from public sources like websites and chat rooms is adding value, too. Open source data was available to the spooks before the reform was enacted but was not "terribly valued in the product for the ultimate consumers," Mary Margaret Graham, deputy director of national intelligence for collection, told TIME. U.S. officials say they are gathering more from open sources on counter-proliferation and terror in particular. For example, open source analysts recently detected what Hayden called a "shift in the themes that have been appearing on Jihadist web sites." He described the catch as "pretty useful strategic intelligence" though he declined to describe the shift further. Negroponte says he is trying to boost the number of Chinese, Arabic and Farsi speaking officers and get them into the field; Graham says they are pouring money into computational linguistics, or machine translation, so that the relatively few translators the U.S. has don't waste time translating irrelevant documents. Negroponte has hired an ombudsman to hear complaints from officers when their views are ignored or underemphasized and officers are now encouraged to start chat rooms to exchange ideas and tips. Another change: when mistakes are made, a review is launched immediately. For example, when the U.S. failed to predict the election of Hamas in the Palestinian

territories earlier this year, an after-action team fingered poor sampling assumptions in the opinion polls analysts had relied on.

But the real test of the new super spook is whether he can bring the CIA, the FBI and the Pentagon to heel. These three agencies have distrusted one another for decades, hoarding information and dismissing one another's accomplishments. Getting them to work together — much less relinquish control of their both human and technical assets — could take years. Even Hayden admits this is an uphill climb: "Let me tell you what we've learned. There is no way to get to self-aware, self-synchronizing [intelligence] system without a kickass center because no one plays nice with each other voluntarily."

It is clear that the DNI's office has created something of a culture shock at CIA, an agency accustomed to virtual autonomy and an almost evangelical faith in its own leaders. Negroponte's arrival has made the storied office of CIA Director less important in Washington and around the world; and the DNI has fought and won a series of personnel fights with the agency as well. Negroponte insists he is not yet running operations from his downtown office and says he never will be. His office recently asked for a list of all the CIA's stations and bases worldwide, as well as the rotation schedule for station chiefs. But he told TIME he would not be choosing them. "That's below my level of interest," he said.

If Congress gave Negroponte considerable power over the CIA, a purely intelligence agency, it gave him much more limited clout over the Pentagon. Nonetheless, lawmakers on Capitol Hill have been disappointed by Negroponte's unwillingness to "reach in" to Pentagon matters and direct policy — in part because Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who opposed the reforms in the first place, doesn't like outside meddling. One example: Negroponte, lawmakers told TIME, too quickly deferred to the Pentagon on the rewriting of the Army interrogation manual over the winter. Both the Army and the CIA have an interest in how that manual is reworded in the wake of abuses at Guantanamo Bay and a Congressional directive to revise the manual. But Negroponte told TIME the revision is in the Pentagon's hands. "That's extremely disappointing," said Sen. Christopher Bond, a member of the intelligence committee, "but it's par for the course." Bond and other lawmakers said Negroponte still lacks the legal authority of a real intelligence czar. Negroponte, said Bond, is a "good man" who "doesn't have a good hand to play."

At the Pentagon, there is an unmistakable feeling of satisfaction that the new director of national intelligence isn't as powerful as some in Congress had hoped. Stephen Cambone, the Pentagon intelligence chief, said it was unrealistic to expect the DNI to get everything right immediately. "I think it does Ambassador Negroponte a grave disservice if he is expected to be clairvoyant in an undertaking which is by any stretch of the imagination one of the most difficult" ever undertaken in government.

There seems to be lingering tension with the FBI as well. Negroponte told TIME that the FBI is "moving toward the idea of having officers writing up reports for their intelligence value, not only to make cases." But he added that the G-men have not been quick to make the leap from law enforcement to intelligence analysts. "They're probably not doing it as much as they could." Asked about FBI complaints that the DNI has underemphasized the bureau in budgetary decisions, Negroponte said, "The FBI has experienced some fairly consistent increases in budget which I think compare very favorably." The joke going around the FBI, meanwhile, is that Negroponte is going to give the bureau one new agent — "but it's going to be a good one."

Negroponte's minders on Capitol Hill, meanwhile, would prefer that he wield a stronger hand in budgetary matters, particularly in shifting funds in Pentagon and CIA operations to more useful purposes. The DNI and his aides say this will emerge over the next year, but point to Negroponte's decision to correct serious management and technical problems in a highly classified Pentagon satellite imagery system. Negroponte's critics dismiss this feat, however, saying Congress had all but ordered it anyway and add that he is still too tentative. "Negroponte has not been a change agent," said Harman. "The goal we had is that he would use the budget to force change. I don't see him doing that."

And there are complaints from members of both parties on both House and Senate intelligence committees that the DNI's office has slowed the flow of intelligence briefings to Capitol Hill. Republican Bond says it is because the reports have to "go through another bureaucracy on the way to us." For his part Negroponte says he has made more than 100 reports on intelligence matters to Capitol Hill in his first year.

Almost all observers have noted an obvious division of labor between Negroponte and Hayden, the four-star Air Force general. Negroponte, the smooth Yale-trained diplomat who once played grammar-school football against the President's uncle, appears to leave the day-to-day management of the office to Hayden, a trim, energetic Pittsburgh native known for his football analogies.

If Negroponte's start has been too slow for his critics, it's little wonder after a visit to his headquarters. The DNI suite looks nothing like the sleek and spacious workspaces of TV's "24" — the Hollywood version of U.S. terror-hunting headquarters. Instead, it's a warren of pathetic-looking workspaces in a 40-year-old building around the corner from the White House. The rooms are dingy, stuffy and overcrowded. People are working with heavily classified material almost on top of each other; there's hardly space for a visitor to sit and not much more to stand.

Next week, the DNI will move all operations across the Anacostia River to an Air Force base — a long way from the White House.

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1183242,00.html>

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