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**TERRORISM SURVEILLANCE**

**Animal Diseases as Warnings**

Wider Tracking of Wildlife Illnesses Aimed at Detecting Bio-Attacks

By [D'Vera Cohn](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, May 24, 2006; Page B03

A growing number of scientists and government agencies are engaged in projects to track outbreaks of animal disease that could give a warning of a bioterrorism attack, modeled on the proverbial canary that coal miners carried to alert them to poisons in the air.

They include officials at the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro, who announced this week that they received an Air Force grant to design a national bioterrorism surveillance network that would link data from two dozen North American wildlife hospitals. The center's president, Ed Clark, said it would be "the bird dog out in front trying to get a whiff of what's going on."

A simple example, he said, would be that ducks dying at a reservoir could signal an attempt to poison the water supply.

Other efforts include a new surveillance program to collect daily information from commercial pet hospitals, the recent establishment of a federal "wildlife disease data warehouse" to swap information and the work of the Canary Database at Yale University, which has assembled thousands of scientific articles on links between wildlife and human health.

The projects have two purposes: to create a comprehensive network that will chart wildlife disease outbreaks and to identify threats to people or wildlife populations from them.

Behind them is a recognition that many potential bioweapons are animal diseases. Among them are avian influenza, plague, anthrax, tularemia and cholera. Most emerging infectious diseases, such as avian influenza, SARS and monkeypox, have a wildlife link. Although some diseases are tracked individually, there is no monitoring effort focused broadly on wildlife outbreaks.

The possibility of an avian flu pandemic is fueling a sense of urgency in these efforts. Some scientists say they learned a hard lesson from the mosquito-borne West Nile virus outbreak that began in 1999, which might have been identified more quickly if wildlife researchers and human health researchers had been working with greater cooperation.

"Not every animal disease indicates a human health risk, but some do more than we are always aware of," said Peter Rabinowitz, an associate professor at the Yale University School of Medicine, the main author of a recent journal article concluding that wildlife, livestock or pets could play a key role in signaling an anthrax or plague attack.

"Human health professionals don't get a lot of training in this, and we are having to play catch-up."

At the Wildlife Center of Virginia, Clark plans to model his network, called Project Tripwire, after the human-disease monitoring of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The center's \$166,000 funding came through Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology.

"There is a tremendous vulnerability in this country to emerging wildlife disease," Clark said. Bio-terrorism is "the scenario of worst-case anticipation," he said, but the network also could serve the broader purpose of sounding alerts about new illnesses that could endanger wildlife populations.

Purdue University scientists and officials of the nation's largest veterinary chain -- Banfield, the Pet Hospital -- announced this month that they were collaborating on a program capable of detecting emerging animal infections that could be transmitted to people. The National Companion Animal Surveillance Program, which would employ daily data from the veterinary clinics, is funded with \$1.2 million from the CDC.

Larry Glickman, a professor of epidemiology and environmental medicine at Purdue, said in a statement that routine testing of pet cats and birds could provide a warning about the presence of avian influenza, which both can carry.

At the same time, Interior Department scientists are ramping up the Web-based wildlife disease data warehouse to collect and publish information on outbreaks for a variety of clients, including public health authorities, state game agencies and the public. They will begin testing the network this summer with data from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. But there are major shortcomings, among them a lack of money and the fact that participation by state wildlife agencies is voluntary.

"We don't have the infrastructure or the funding, or in some ways the legal mandate, to do this because the rules for reporting human disease and domestic animal disease are fairly well defined but for wildlife disease are not," said F. Joshua Dein, principal investigator with the Interior Department's National Wildlife Health Center.

The state wildlife agencies in Maryland and Virginia plan to participate in the national network, officials in both states said. In those states, biologists and veterinarians mainly target their efforts to check deer for a neurological condition called chronic wasting disease and monitor waterfowl for avian influenza.

Jonathan Sleeman, wildlife veterinarian with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, said the focus on wildlife disease and bioterrorism is part of a broader recognition that wildlife disease is more dangerous than previously thought.

"There's an increasing body of evidence there are wildlife diseases that are a threat to wildlife itself," he said.

"There's more contact and a globalized world where wildlife are moving a lot more than they used to. There's an increased opportunity for disease exchange."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/23/AR2006052301676.html>

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The Australian

## **JI training in chemical weapons**

Natalie O'Brien

25may06

TERRORISTS linked to the group blamed for the Bali bombings are being trained in the use of chemical weapons that can cause widespread death and destruction.

Terrorism expert Rohan Gunaratna has warned that the authorities have proof Jemaah Islamiah has been training its operatives in chemical warfare.

Dr Gunaratna said authorities had recovered a training manual from the home of a senior JI leader instructing terrorists on how to develop and launch an attack with the deadly chemical, hydrogen cyanide.

"The chemicals and biological agents discussed in the manual were similar to those that al-Qa'ida had been experimenting with and producing in laboratories in Afghanistan," Dr Gunaratna said. "Al-Qa'ida has conducted experiments on dogs and rabbits exposing them to the fumes and forcing them to die harrowing deaths."

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty yesterday confirmed chemical warfare was an option that terrorist groups might consider, saying: "We do have to be prepared for biological and chemical attacks."

Speaking from Kuala Lumpur, where he was attending a meeting of regional police chiefs, Mr Keelty said groups such as JI had demonstrated their ability to quickly embrace new technology.

The AFP has been given \$19.1million over five years to establish a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) data centre, which will be responsible for collating and co-ordinating the latest information on threats, strategies to combat them and sending the information to authorities in the region.

Mr Keelty yesterday signed an agreement with Malaysian police to work together to fight transnational crime, including terrorism. The AFP has already signed agreements with 10 other nations.

Mr Keelty said there was now an unprecedented level of co-operation between regional police agencies, which had put them in a much stronger position to fight terrorism.

Mr Keelty said yesterday one of the breakthroughs from this week's conference was the launch of a web-based criminal database linking member nations and the Interpol database. He said the database would allow authorities to track the movements of criminals and terrorists throughout the region.

Dr Gunaratna, also speaking from Kuala Lumpur yesterday where he was attending a cyber-terrorism conference, said the chemical weapons training manual had been seized during a raid on the home of JI leader Taufiq Rifqi in the southern Philippines.

The document has been analysed and translated by the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies. Dr Gunaratna said the manual was "rudimentary when compared to al-Qa'ida manuals but it demonstrated a clear intent of JI to develop chemical and biological weapons". He said the interest of global jihad groups to manufacture, develop and use chemical and biological weapons such as hydrogen cyanide was growing significantly. Hydrogen cyanide is a widely used industrial chemical which in high doses is extremely toxic, causing laboured breathing, headaches, dizziness, hyperventilation, convulsions, heart attack and death.

Dr Gunaratna said JI had also been involved in training in al-Qa'ida's anthrax program in Afghanistan.

He said there had been past plans to move the anthrax laboratory from Afghanistan to Indonesia but the plans were thwarted by the "vigilance" of the Indonesian, Thai and Malaysian police and subsequent arrest in 2003 of JI operations chief Hambali.

Dr Gunaratna said jihadist groups around the world were keen to use chemical warfare and said governments should invest more in developing intelligence on these groups.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19248166-2702,00.html>

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USA Today  
May 25, 2006  
Pg. 7

## **White House Hints At Talks With Iranians**

By Barbara Slavin, USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration said Wednesday it might talk to Iran about the nuclear issue but only if Iran suspends its uranium enrichment program.

"When that happens ... then there may be some opportunities," White House spokesman Tony Snow said. He declined to give details other than to say the talks would include other countries.

The comment came as officials from the United States, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China met in London and considered a package of incentives and punishments to convince Iran to suspend its nuclear program.

Three European diplomats — two in Washington and one in London who participated in the talks — said the package included an offer to Iran to hold talks about the security of the Persian Gulf that would include the United States. The talks would be contingent on Iran suspending its enrichment program.

The diplomats asked not to be named because the proposal is still being negotiated. The State Department would not comment on the negotiations except to say there had been progress.

Former secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Henry Kissinger and foreign officials such as Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal have urged the Bush administration to talk to Iran about the nuclear issue.

Former Defense secretary William Perry, who negotiated with North Korea under the Clinton administration, said Wednesday that "it is essential that we be prepared to conduct direct talks with Iran" to convince Russia and China

to support tough sanctions if Iran refuses to suspend uranium enrichment. Both countries have refused to back a United Nations Security Council resolution that would lay the groundwork for sanctions or military action. Iranian officials, among them national security adviser Ali Larijani, have called for talks with the United States, arguing that the Bush administration is the main force behind international efforts to stop Iran's nuclear progress and to undermine its Islamic government. The administration has refused, saying Iran is a problem for the whole world and wants to use negotiations as a delaying tactic.

If Iran stops enriching uranium, European countries would also offer to sell Iran a sophisticated light-water nuclear power plant, the diplomats said. Such a reactor would be less likely to be misused for weapons.

Iran says its uranium enrichment program is meant to produce fuel for power plants; Western nations suspect Iran wants the ability to make weapons.

[http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060525/a\\_iran25.art.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060525/a_iran25.art.htm)

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Washington Post

May 25, 2006

Pg. 23

## **Powers Inch Ahead On Nuclear Deal With Iran**

By Reuters

LONDON, May 24 -- World powers made progress but failed to reach consensus in talks Wednesday on a package of incentives and threats to prevent Iran from being able to build a nuclear bomb.

Senior officials representing the U.N. Security Council's permanent members -- China, Russia, the United States, France and Britain -- plus Germany met to try to narrow divisions on inducing Tehran to halt sensitive uranium enrichment work.

"What I've heard is that there has been great progress," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said in Washington, adding that a deal was "not done yet." Washington and Western allies suspect Iran's professed bid for nuclear power for its economy is a cover for efforts to develop an atomic bomb. The Islamic republic has said it is developing nuclear technology for civilian energy generation, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad issued a defiant message Wednesday.

"Using nuclear energy is Iran's right," Ahmadinejad told a rally in a speech on state television.

At a separate meeting in Washington, Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he discussed Iran's views with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice after talks with Tehran's negotiator, Ali Larijani.

"Of course I briefed Secretary Rice on the Iranian point of view, but it's rather different from the U.S. point of view," he said.

In Tehran, an Iranian official said talks with the United States were "not on the agenda" after The Washington Post reported Wednesday that Iran was making explicit requests for direct discussions with Washington.

"If there is going to be talk, there has to be respect . . . and the Americans have shown they are not familiar with this element," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said. "Therefore, direct talk with America is not on the agenda."

McCormack, however, said Iran recently had sought bilateral talks, but that the Bush administration would stick with a multilateral approach. He added that "it's probably just an effort to change the subject, because they're feeling the pressure of the international community" on the nuclear issue.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/24/AR2006052402395.html>

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Washington Times

May 26, 2006

Pg. 13

## **U.S. Aide Doubts Tehran Will Bend**

By David R. Sands, The Washington Times

The top American diplomat at the U.N. nuclear watchdog held out little hope yesterday that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will give up programs that could lead to the development of a nuclear weapon.

"We shouldn't fool ourselves. The president of Iran is not someone who is swayed by normal diplomatic demarches," said Ambassador Greg Schulte, U.S. representative to the Vienna, Austria-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

But Mr. Schulte, speaking to reporters and analysts during a Washington visit, said that there also were divisions within Iran's ruling Islamic regime over Tehran's nuclear confrontation, and that the United States and its allies must give Iran a clear path to back down.

Although the hard-line Iranian president "wants a crisis," the U.S. government and its negotiating partners "have to make clear to him and to the leadership that there is a better path to take," Mr. Schulte said.

Diplomats from Germany and the five U.N. Security Council permanent powers -- the United States, France, Britain, Russia and China -- are expected to gather again next week in Europe to try to agree on a package of carrots and sticks designed to induce Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said yesterday.

Envoys from Canada, Italy and Japan are expected to join the negotiations.

U.S. officials said that a meeting Wednesday in London produced progress on the outlines of an offer to Tehran, but that more talks were needed. The package of incentives and sanctions is designed to get Tehran to halt uranium enrichment, which can lead to the production of either electrical power or a nuclear bomb.

Last night, President Bush said he would consider providing incentives to Iran if it agreed to resume a suspension on nuclear-enrichment activities that the United States thinks is aimed at producing nuclear weapons.

Mr. Bush, at a White House press conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, said the two leaders spent a lot of time discussing strategy on how to resolve the Iranian nuclear crisis.

Iran insists its programs are solely for peaceful civilian energy needs, but the IAEA's 35-nation board has found that Tehran has refused to cooperate on inspection and verification programs needed to validate those claims.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei, who briefed top Bush administration officials this week, will update IAEA board members at a June 12 meeting in Vienna on Iran's cooperation, Mr. Schulte said.

"At this point, I don't think [Mr. ElBaradei] will have much to report," he said.

On other issues, Mr. Schulte:

- Denied that a proposed U.S. civilian nuclear deal with India -- which never signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty -- had undermined Washington's campaign against Iran. "I hear that argument a lot more in Washington than I do in Vienna," he said.

He said members of the 30-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group, which must approve parts of the special deal for India, expressed growing support for the deal in their most recent meeting.

- Said the United States and its allies hope to present a plan at the June IAEA board meeting that would guarantee nuclear fuel supplies for countries that agree not to enrich uranium on their own soil, with a final deal possible by the end of the year.

- Said IAEA inspectors have found Iran's nuclear scientists to be "technically competent" and "motivated," but he added that there was no hard and fast estimate on when Iran might be able to produce a nuclear weapon.

"Anybody who gives an exact time frame on that probably doesn't know what he is talking about," he said.

*Nicholas Kravev contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060525-111030-1698r.htm>

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Christian Science Monitor

May 26, 2006

## **US Debates Carrots, Sticks For Iran's Nuclear Program**

*US officials met in London to discuss incentives for Iran with Germany, Britain, France, China, and Russia.*

By Scott Peterson, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

ISTANBUL, TURKEY - Amid a din of uncompromising rhetoric from and about Iran, the UN's permanent five powers and Germany this week worked to hammer out a package of incentives and threats they hope will ensure the Islamic Republic's nuclear program is limited to peaceful purposes.

On the table: giving Iran nuclear reactors and providing fuel for energy production, as well as economic and security incentives. In exchange, Iran would have to give up uranium enrichment - a step that can lead to weapons production - or face UN sanctions or even an arms embargo.

Cutting through layers of mistrust to determine any US role - as well as Iran's ultimate goals - will not be easy, given a relationship calcified by more than 25 years of hostile rhetoric and official silence. But increasingly, analysts say that any deal ultimately depends on direct talks between the US and Iran - and possibly a US "security guarantee" that it will not attack Iran.

"If you are going to solve the problem permanently, US participation is a must," says Nasser Hadian-Jazy, a political scientist at Tehran University who was recently at Columbia University in New York. "It's like the ... elephant in the room. Everybody knows [the US] is there, but not talking about it is not going to solve the problem."

Britain, France, and Germany are spearheading the diplomatic effort on the UN Security Council. But Russia and China are loath to back sanctions that they believe could lead to an arms embargo or military action. Senior diplomats from those nations and the US reported "progress" during talks in London on Wednesday, but no agreement.

Foreign ministers of all six countries are expected to meet shortly, and Russia's National Security Council chief Igor Ivanov has been invited to meet with Iran's top nuclear negotiator Ali Larijani in coming days in Tehran.

Analysts say that "red lines" on both sides have been shifting, but that no deal is likely to stand unless the US and Iran engage in direct talks. An American "security guarantee" for Iran may be required, experts say, but so far US officials dismiss any deal that would ensure the survival of Iran's current government.

"When the US avoids giving a security guarantee [to Iran], it means they surely want to collapse and destroy the regime," says Saeed Laylaz, a political and security analyst in Tehran. "It is very good for the hard-liners in Iran. They like a critical situation in which they can say to the people: 'The United States of America is why we have trouble in the world.'"

Mr. Laylaz says that Iran would be willing to "stop" uranium enrichment completely with the right deal: a security guarantee, then getting the US directly involved in nuclear negotiations. US sanctions should be removed, he adds, and Iran integrated more fully into the global economy.

White House Press Secretary Tony Snow did not rule out the possibility of talks on Wednesday, but said that Iran would have to halt enrichment first. "When that happens, all right, then there may be some opportunities," said Mr. Snow.

The result is a dilemma for Iran. "If you know the US wants to destroy you, and the four borders of your country are occupied by the US military, you know that you should accelerate your uranium enrichment, not suspend it," says Laylaz. "But at the same time, [Iranian officials] are asking the US: 'Please come to the table and start negotiating.' Because they realize there is no country in the world ... that can stop the US if it wants to militarily attack Iran." Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), indicated during talks on Wednesday with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Iran might delay enrichment plans for five or six years and accept the intrusive inspections of the "additional protocol" of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"The default position in Iranian foreign policy is hard-line, and you have to work hard to bring it the other way," says Shahram Chubin, director of studies at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy.

"The hard-line conservatives in Iran believe that dealing with the Americans and the West is a contaminating thing, that you are going to give up all your values, and end up being ... a nothing," says Mr. Chubin. "And the whole essence of the revolution is as an example, a model in the Islamic world. They have a vanguard reputation, and they're not going to give it up - there is a lot there."

Still, Iran has been signaling that it wants to talk. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sent a letter to Mr. Bush on May 8, the first such high-level public contact since Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution. Though it was full of tough and critical talk, experts suggest that a Bush response - ruled out for now - could be first steps toward dialogue.

One day later, another letter from Iran's former top nuclear negotiator, Hassan Rohani, who remains the influential representative of Iran's top religious leader on the Supreme National Security Council, was published in Time magazine, taking a "good cop" tone to Mr. Ahmadinejad's "bad cop."

"Iran is intent on producing nuclear fuel domestically for reasons both historic and long-term economic," he wrote, laying out an eight-point plan for a negotiated solution.

Past failures to declare aspects of nuclear programs "are not uncommon among NPT members," and "an Iranian secret weapon program is only hype," Mr. Rohani wrote. "A solution imposed on Iran by the Security Council is unlikely to provide assurances the US seeks about the Iranian nuclear program."

Iran has enriched small quantities of uranium to levels needed for nuclear fuel in recent weeks, using a cascade of 164 centrifuges. Iran wants to start two more such pilot projects in coming months - before beginning production with tens of thousands of centrifuges to fuel a Russian-made reactor at Bushehr. That reactor should be completed later this year. .

Ahmadinejad on Wednesday claimed that Iran had mastered "the entire nuclear fuel cycle from start to finish," and that it would never give it up.

"The minimum [acceptable to Iran] would be at least to have this 164-centrifuge cascade running - this is a red line," says Mr. Hadian-Jazy. The US holds that all enrichment must stop; some Europeans and IAEA diplomats say that is unrealistic.

"Is it worth - and I'm talking about both parties--to go to war for one cascade?" asks Hadian-Jazy. "[Iran] is ready to give a more intrusive inspection regime, real-time monitoring, ratifying the Additional Protocol, accepting some transparency measures..."



The picture in Iran is further clouded by local politics. "When you ask, 'What do the Iranians want?' the answer is: 'Which Iranians?' " says Chubin at the Geneva Centre. "It's certainly true that Rohani and [former president and head of the powerful Expediency Council Ali Akbar] Rafsanjani believe Iran should use the leverage of their ... program to cut an overall deal with the West.

"The other view, of Ahmadinejad and Larijani, is that: 'We've got the power; we don't need anyone's help with our own security,' " says Chubin. "They want nuclear weapons to be the leading power in the region, in order to be in opposition to the West, and they have no interest in a global grand bargain."

And there is another player, whose vote in Iran counts above all others: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "They don't want a military attack," says analyst Laylaz. "It's not the hard-liners' [red line], but the Leader's red line."

"I'm not sure about US policy toward Iran," adds Leylaz. "If they test a potential negotiated way, and ask strongly to suspend any uranium enrichment, we can avoid a catastrophe. Otherwise, I'm not sure about the future."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0526/p05s01-wogi.html>

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The Australian

## **JI planned Holocaust gas attack in buildings**

Natalie O'Brien

27may06

INDONESIAN terrorists planned to attack Western targets by spreading hydrogen cyanide, a deadly gas used during the Holocaust, through the air-conditioning systems of large buildings.

Details of the method of the proposed attack, designed to maximise the number of victims, were revealed in a 26-page training manual produced by members of Jemaah Islamiah, the terrorist group blamed for the Bali bombings. Hand-written in the Indonesian language Bahasa, the document expresses optimism that victims exposed to the poison gas will die within 30 seconds.

But the plans went awry when police raided a JI safe house in the southern Philippines and discovered the training manual.

The details have been revealed for the first time by Rohan Gunaratna, of the International Centre for Terrorism and Political Violence Research's Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies.

Dr Gunaratna said the document discussed several chemical gases, pesticides, narcotics and biological toxins.

Among them were hydrogen sulfide, phosgene, chlorine and arsenic.

"The chemical weapons section of the manual discusses fairly accurately the production of several highly potent agents that theoretically could cause the death of a large number of people," Dr Gunaratna said.

"The document surveys several agents of disturbing potency and expresses considerable optimism and fascination with regard to how minuscule amounts of the respective agent are needed to kill a large number of people."

In particular, when discussing one toxin, it said: "30ml of the agent can kill 60 million people, God willing."

The manual carried the most detail about hydrogen cyanide, also known as Cyclone B, which was used to kill millions of Jews during World War II.

It suggested hydrogen cyanide be the killing agent of choice because of its ease of production and delivery. It was also easy to produce.

Dr Gunaratna said the production and delivery methods described in the manual for chemical attack were accurate.

The Australian Federal Police is setting up a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear data centre, which will be responsible for collating and co-ordinating the latest information on such threats, as well as strategies to combat them.

Dr Gunaratna said a faction of JI that embraced al-Qa'ida leader Osama bin Laden's ideals could be expected to search for "increasingly destructive means in order to keep escalating their struggle". But he said the manual revealed that JI was nowhere near ready for a chemical or biological attack.

"At best the group may be able to mount a small-scale hydrogen cyanide attack that may succeed in killing a handful of individuals," Dr Gunaratna said.

But he warned that it was just "a question of time" before they acquired the capability.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,19270458-5001561,00.html>

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## **U.S. Is Debating Talks With Iran On Nuclear Issue**

By Steven R. Weisman

WASHINGTON, May 26 — The Bush administration is beginning to debate whether to set aside a longstanding policy taboo and open direct talks with Iran, to help avert a crisis over Tehran's suspected nuclear weapons program, European officials and Americans close to the administration said Friday.

European officials who have been in contact with the administration in recent weeks said the discussion was heating up, as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice worked with European foreign ministers to persuade Iran to suspend its efforts to enrich uranium.

European leaders make no secret of their desire for the United States to join in the talks with Iran, if only to show that the Americans have gone the extra mile to avoid a confrontation that could spiral into a fight over sanctions or even military action.

But since the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the crisis over the seizure of American hostages in November that year, the United States has avoided direct talks with Iran. There were sporadic contacts during the war in Afghanistan, in the early stages of the Iraq war and in the days after the earthquake in Bam, Iran, at the end of 2003.

European officials say Ms. Rice has begun discussing the issue with top aides at the State Department. Her belief, they say, is that ultimately the matter will have to be addressed by the administration's national security officials, whether talks with Iran remain at an impasse or even if there is some progress.

But others who know her well say she is resisting on the ground that signaling a willingness to talk would show weakness and disrupt the delicate negotiations with Europe. Ms. Rice is also said to fear that the administration might end up making too many concessions to Iran.

Administration officials said President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld have opposed direct talks, even through informal back channels. As a result, many European officials say they doubt that a decision to talk is likely soon.

The prospect of direct talks between the United States and Iran is so politically delicate within the Bush administration that the officials who described the emerging debate would discuss it only after being granted anonymity.

Those officials included representatives of several European countries, as well as Americans who said they had discussed the issue recently with people inside the Bush administration. Some of the officials made clear that they favored direct talks between the United States and Iran.

State Department officials refused to talk about the issue, even anonymously. But over the last week, administration spokesmen have been careful not to rule out talks.

Discussion about possible American contacts with Iran has been fueled not simply by the Europeans, but by a growing chorus of outsiders with ties to the administration who have spoken out in favor of talks.

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, in a recent column in *The Washington Post*, raised the possibility that the recent rambling letter from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to President Bush — dismissed by Ms. Rice as an offensive tirade — could be seen as an opportunity to open contacts.

Both Richard N. Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a former top aide to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, and Richard L. Armitage, the former deputy secretary of state under Mr. Powell, have also advocated talks with Iran.

"Diplomacy is much more than just talking to your friends," Mr. Armitage said in a telephone interview. "You've got to talk to people who aren't our friends, and even people you dislike. Some people in the administration think that diplomacy is a sign of weakness. In fact, it can show that you're strong."

Mr. Armitage held the last high-level discussions with Iran, after the Bam earthquake. In November 2004, Mr. Powell sat next to the Iranian foreign minister at a dinner during a conference in Egypt on Iraq, but he said they engaged only in small talk.

The United States has stayed out of the talks with Iran, which began in late 2004 and got new life last summer when, with American endorsement, the Europeans offered to help Iran integrate politically and economically with the West if it ended its nuclear ambitions.

Also on the table were unspecified security guarantees suggesting that Iran would not have to worry about outside efforts to topple the government.

The Europeans are now working with the United States, Russia and China on a revised package of economic, political and nuclear energy incentives if Iran ended its nuclear enrichment activities. Also being sought, at least by the Europeans and the United States, is an agreement to take Iran to the United Nations Security Council if it continues to defy the demands for compliance on nuclear issues.



European officials say the discussions about possible American-Iranian contacts are not part of these talks, but would be a way to improve the atmosphere with Iran.

Among the European diplomats who have urged Ms. Rice to consider direct contacts with Iran are Germany's foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, raised the issue with President Bush when she visited Washington earlier this year.

"What's interesting about Rice is that she listens when you make your case," a European official said.

Another European diplomat said, "It's a European aspiration for talks to happen," but added, "Nothing is likely at the moment." Still another European diplomat said of the Americans that "everyone and their brother has been telling them to do it."

One reason senior administration officials do not like the idea of talking with Iran, many of them say, is that they are not certain Iranian leaders would respond positively. A rebuff from Iran, even to a back-channel query, is to be avoided at all costs, various officials agree.

The administration, for example, has been embarrassed by the on-again, off-again possibility of talks with Iran on Iraq, which were authorized by Ms. Rice late last year.

The concern, some say, is that talking to Iran only about Iraq will anger Sunni dissidents in Iraq, reinforcing the Sunni-led insurgency while enhancing the status of Iraqi Shiites, whose strong ties to Iran make Washington uneasy. On the other hand, the American ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, was said to be eager to enlist Iran in helping to deal with Iranian-backed Shiite militias, which are accused of carrying out killings and kidnappings of Sunnis in Iraq.

Some Europeans favor American participation in the European-Iranian talks, at least down the road. Others raise the possibility of informal contacts through nongovernmental organizations or policy institutes.

Incentives and possible sanctions against Iran are to be the focus of negotiations between the United States and the European nations in coming days and weeks.

The United States is resisting the Europeans' desire to increase economic incentives for Iran, because that would involve a lifting of American sanctions on European businesses that helped Iran. At the same time, Russia and China are resisting the idea of seeking a new resolution at the United Nations Security Council that could be seen as clearing the way for sanctions or possible military action against Iran.

*David E. Sanger contributed reporting for this article.*

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Baltimore Sun

May 30, 2006

## **Diplomats Say Countries To OK Package On Iran**

*It could bring sanctions or reward Tehran*

By Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria --Top U.S., Russian, Chinese and European officials plan to sign off this week on a package of incentives and penalties meant to reward Iran if it gives up uranium enrichment - and punish it if it doesn't, diplomats said yesterday.

Agreement by the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, plus Germany, could open the way for sanctions if Tehran remains defiant and refuses to abandon technology that can be used to make the fissile core of nuclear warheads.

The meeting of foreign ministers, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, was set for Thursday in Vienna, Austria, said the diplomats, who requested anonymity for divulging the confidential information.

Tehran appeared unimpressed: One official repeated that Iran is permitted to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Another said his country had experimented in technology that can be used to make hydrogen bombs.

Tehran's main goal was recognition of "the essential right of Iran to have nuclear technology," Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said during a visit to Malaysia.

State television quoted nuclear official Sadat Hosseini as saying that his country "is competing with the advanced world in the field of producing nuclear energy through fusion."

Fusion is the main principle behind the hydrogen bomb, which can be hundreds of times more powerful than atomic weapons that use fission. In a hydrogen bomb, radiation from a nuclear fission explosion sets off a fusion reaction responsible for a powerful blast and radioactivity.

Peaceful uses of fusion are in the experimental stage.

International concern about Iran's nuclear aims has been focused on fears that it could be trying to make a fission-type nuclear weapon by enriching uranium to weapons-grade level. Hosseini's comments were likely to add to concern about Tehran's interest in fusion.

But former U.N. nuclear inspector David Albright said the announcement was probably "not very worrisome."

"They like to pretend they are competing, but their program is [probably] pretty rudimentary," said Albright, who runs the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security.

"One part of their strategy is to say, 'We have it all, so you can't stop us,'" he said.

Any package that foreign ministers approve Thursday would then be presented to Tehran by France, Britain and Germany - the trio of nations that broke off talks with Iran in August after it resumed activities linked to uranium enrichment.

The Security Council gave Iran until the end of April to suspend all such activities. Instead of complying, Iran announced last month that it had for the first time successfully enriched uranium and was doing research on advanced centrifuges to produce more of the material in less time.

Indirectly linked to any possible deal for Iran would be agreement on a resolution tough enough for Washington but acceptable to Tehran ally Moscow, a dispute that has hobbled action by the Security Council's permanent members for months.

If Iran remains defiant, the proposal - as outlined by diplomats familiar with the text - calls for a resolution imposing sanctions under Chapter VII, Article 41 of the U.N. Charter. But it avoids any reference to Article 42, which is the trigger for possible military action to enforce any such resolution.

The proposal also calls for new consultations among the five permanent Security Council members on any further steps against Iran - a move meant to dispel complaints by Russia and China that once the screws on Iran are tightened, the council would automatically move toward military involvement.

Among the possible sanctions are a visa ban on government officials, the freezing of assets, blocking financial transactions by government figures and those involved in the country's nuclear program, an arms embargo and a blockade on the shipping of refined oil products to Iran.

If Tehran agrees to suspend enrichment, enter new negotiations on its nuclear program and lift a ban on intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, rewards would include agreement to "suspend discussion of Iran's file at the Security Council," as well as help in building a peaceful domestic nuclear program that uses an outside supply of enriched uranium.

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