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Washington Times
June 20, 2006
Pg. 1

N. Korean Threat Activates Shield

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

The Pentagon activated its new U.S. ground-based interceptor missile defense system, and officials announced yesterday that any long-range missile launch by North Korea would be considered a "provocative act."

Poor weather conditions above where the missile site was located by U.S. intelligence satellites indicates that an immediate launch is unlikely, said officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

However, intelligence officials said preparations have advanced to the point where a launch could take place within several days to a month.

Two Navy Aegis warships are patrolling near North Korea as part of the global missile defense and would be among the first sensors that would trigger the use of interceptors, the officials said yesterday.

The U.S. missile defense system includes 11 long-range interceptor missiles, including nine deployed at Fort Greeley, Alaska, and two at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The system was switched from test to operational mode within the past two weeks, the officials said.

One senior Bush administration official told The Washington Times that an option being considered would be to shoot down the Taepodong missile with responding interceptors.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice added that any launch would be a serious matter and "would be taken with utmost seriousness and indeed a provocative act."

White House spokesman Tony Snow declined to comment when asked if shooting down a launched missile was being considered as an option.

President Bush had telephoned more than a dozen heads of state regarding North Korea's launch preparations, Mr. Snow said. He did not identify the leaders who were called by Mr. Bush.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said the U.S. has made it clear to North Korea that the communist regime should abide by the missile-test ban it imposed in 1999 and reaffirmed in a pact with Japan in 2002.

"The United States has a limited missile defense system," Mr. Whitman said. He declined to say if the system is operational or whether it would be used.

"U.S. Northern Command continues to monitor the situation, and we are prepared to defend the country in any way necessary," said spokesman Michael Kucharek.

Any decision to shoot down a missile would be made at the highest command levels, which includes the president, secretary of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

In Tokyo, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Japan and South Korea are trying to avert a launch.

"Even now, we hope that they will not do this," Mr. Koizumi said. "But if they ignore our views and launch a missile, then the Japanese government, consulting with the United States, would have to respond harshly."

John R. Bolton, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said the Bush administration is consulting with other Security Council members on how to respond to a Taepodong launch.

In Australia, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said North Korea's ambassador had been summoned and told any missile launch would result in "serious consequences."

U.S. intelligence officials said there are signs that the North Koreans recently began fueling the Taepodong with highly corrosive rocket fuel. Normally, when liquid fuel is loaded into missiles the missile must be fired within five to 10 days, or it must be de-fueled and the motors cleaned, a difficult and hazardous process.

The Taepodong was first tested in August 1998, and North Korea claimed that it was a space launch vehicle that orbited a satellite. U.S. intelligence officials said the last stage of the missile was powered but did not reach orbit. A new test would likely be a more advanced version.

"Our concerns about missile activity in North Korea are long-standing and well-documented," said Mr. Whitman, the Pentagon spokesman.

The test preparations began several weeks after the Bush administration imposed new rules on U.S. companies that prohibit American or foreign firms incorporated in the United States from flying North Korea's flag on merchant ships.

According to the Treasury Department, Korean War-era sanctions were loosened in 2000 in order to entice North Korea into abiding by the missile flight test ban.

One reason for the concerns about a launch is that North Korea has issued threatening statements through its official press and broadcast organs that it is ready to go to war with states such as Japan and the United States that impose economic sanctions.

This article is based in part on wire service reports.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060620-123010-4554r.htm>

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U.S. Pressures North Korea Over Missile

Rice says a launch would be a 'provocative act.' Bush confers with world leaders, and South Korea issues a stern warning to Pyongyang.

By Peter Spiegel and Barbara Demick, Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration moved to ratchet up diplomatic pressure on North Korea on Monday, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warning that a launch of a ballistic missile would be a "provocative act" that would signal Pyongyang's rejection of international efforts to reach a compromise on its nuclear weapons program.

The prospect of a long-range missile in the hands of one of the world's most stridently anti-American regimes spread alarm in Washington. A missile test at this time would also be an embarrassing setback to the Bush administration's efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation in Iran and elsewhere.

President Bush participated in overseas phone calls made by administration officials, and U.S. military officials pointed to their missile defense capabilities without indicating whether there were plans to use them. In Tokyo, officials said Japan would respond "severely," and South Korean officials early today also delivered a stern warning. The missile is thought to have a range that could reach U.S. territories in the Pacific such as Guam and possibly parts of Alaska or Hawaii. Analysts believe it is considerably more sophisticated than the Taepodong 1 that North Korea shot into the Pacific Ocean in 1998 before signing a missile-testing moratorium.

As of Monday, satellite intelligence from the launch site in Musudan-ri on North Korea's east coast suggested that the fueling was on the verge of completion. Once fueling is finished, U.S. sources said, any launch probably would take place within 48 hours, since such missiles can be damaged if left fueled for extended periods. Siphoning off liquid fuel is considered difficult and dangerous.

A South Korean official told reporters in Seoul that all that remained was "the click of a button."

But another South Korean official questioned whether fueling was completed and said the launch had not passed the point of no return. The official hinted at efforts to get North Korea to change its mind.

"The unofficial communication channel is always open," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. With talks seemingly at a standstill and military options considered imprudent, U.S. officials were left to wonder about North Korea's next step.

"We're still waiting. We don't know what their intentions are," said a senior State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity given the uncertainty involved. "We don't know for sure that they're going to push the button. But the trend lines have all been in one direction."

Bush took part in calls to more than a dozen heads of state and government to discuss the consequences of a launch, said White House spokesman Tony Snow. He refused to name leaders contacted by Bush. Snow confirmed that U.S. diplomats have been in contact with North Korean counterparts in New York, where the two countries have on occasion communicated through their United Nations delegations.

After days of silence, South Korea joined Japan and the United States early today and issued a pointed warning.

"The government explained to North Korea the serious repercussions a missile launch would bring and strongly demanded that test-fire plans be scrapped," Woo Sang-ho, a spokesman for South Korea's ruling Uri Party, said this morning in Seoul.

The U.S. issued similar warnings in 1998 when it learned that North Korea had begun fueling a Taepodong 1 missile, a multistage rocket that can fly about 1,250 miles, but Pyongyang ignored the admonishments and launched the missile over Japan. The projectile, which if developed sufficiently could be a delivery system for a nuclear weapon, dropped harmlessly into the Pacific after its third stage blew up.

In 1993, North Korea test-fired a modified Scud missile with a range of about 620 miles.

The situation today is more dangerous than in 1998 because North Korea has considerably advanced its nuclear program. The nation pulled out of a nuclear-freeze agreement in 2002 and restarted its reactor and reprocessing plant in Yongbyon.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il — toward whom Bush has expressed great personal animosity, although the two have never met — has made a point of snubbing the administration's nonproliferation efforts.

Since September, Pyongyang has boycotted six-nation meetings over negotiating a dismantlement of its nuclear program. Measures to punish the North Koreans by shutting down an overseas bank the regime was accused of using to launder proceeds of drug trafficking and counterfeiting have so far failed to bring Pyongyang into compliance.

The CIA believes that North Korea has enough nuclear material for 10 weapons, although it is not clear whether its scientists have the ability to make a nuclear warhead that could be mounted on a missile.

Missile experts in South Korea and the United States believe that the current missile is not carrying a warhead, but a satellite. The technology for launching a satellite or a warhead is virtually the same, but if it launches a satellite, North Korea could claim that it was a purely civilian undertaking.

Preparations for a new launch, which analysts said appeared to be for a larger Taepodong 2 rocket, have been taking place for weeks at the remote Musudan-ri missile base under the scrutiny of U.S., Japanese and South Korean spy satellites.

"I think it is already taken with utmost seriousness by regional states and by the world because it would once again show North Korea determined to deepen its isolation, determined not to take a path that is a path of compromise and a path of peace, but rather instead to once again saber-rattle," Rice said. "From our point of view, it would be a very serious matter indeed."

Pentagon officials would not describe the alert status of U.S. forces in response to the North Korean situation. Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, noted that the U.S. "does have a limited missile defense system" in the Pacific, but he would not say whether the U.S. would use the system if a launch occurred.

Although the U.S. military has not been able to shoot down decoy missiles with any regularity, it maintains monitoring and tracking capabilities. Ships with sophisticated Aegis radar systems have been used to track missile launches in the Pacific.

Whitman added that the Pentagon considered any North Korean missile firing a "launch" rather than a "test."

" 'Test' would imply we know their intentions," Whitman said.

North Korean missile technology remains shrouded in secrecy. The 1998 launch of the Taepodong 1 caught analysts by surprise, since it was not known that Pyongyang had the capability of developing a multistage missile.

There has been speculation since the 1999 moratorium, reached after the U.S. agreed to lift a number of economic sanctions, that North Korea was attempting to develop the larger Taepodong 2, which would be able to fly more than twice the distance of the Taepodong 1 and reach important U.S. military facilities in Guam. Depending on whether the missile had two or three stages, it theoretically could reach parts of Alaska as well. Missile experts believe the new missile also has advanced decoying capabilities that would make it difficult to track.

U.S. officials emphasized Monday that they could not be certain which type of rocket was being readied.

North Korea has repeatedly used its nuclear and missile programs as bargaining chips to either win humanitarian aid, get economic sanctions lifted or make progress toward developing civilian nuclear technologies. That track record led some analysts to believe Pyongyang might again be attempting to win concessions from the West.

In South Korea, there were suggestions that there might be last-minute efforts to strike a deal that would probably involve humanitarian aid from China or South Korea.

"The North Koreans might turn cautious and back down from the possible launch, but also could expect compensation," said Hong Yong-pyo, a North Korea expert with South Korea's Hanyang University.

The missile launch was originally expected to take place Sunday at 2 p.m., when North Koreans were instructed to raise the national flag and tune in on television and radio stations for a "message to the people." South Korean officials were surprised when nothing happened. There is a debate among analysts as to whether the delay has been due to technical problems, second thoughts — or simply bad weather.

Spiegel reported from Washington and Demick from Seoul. Times staff writers Julian E. Barnes and Doyle McManus in Washington and Maggie Farley at the U.N. also contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missile20jun20,1,881022.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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New York Times

June 20, 2006

Bush, At Merchant Academy, Warns Iran On Nuclear Program

By Jim Rutenberg and Sheryl Gay Stolberg

KINGS POINT, N.Y., June 19 — On the day before he was to depart for a meeting with European allies in Vienna, President Bush issued a stiff warning to Iran on Monday, saying it should suspend its uranium enrichment program now or face "progressively stronger" economic sanctions and further political isolation.

Mr. Bush reiterated the United States' offer to join multinational talks with Iran, but only if it immediately ceased uranium production. If Iran rejects that offer, he said, "It will result in action before the Security Council, further isolation from the world and progressively stronger political and economic sanctions."

Still, he mixed his stern oratory with words of inducement. Speaking at a commencement ceremony at the United States Merchant Marine Academy here, he promised Iran that compliance would result in huge benefits for its economy and its people. He indicated that the United States was open to allowing Iran to develop civilian nuclear

capacity, though under the proper "safeguards," keeping the administration's recent agreement on the possibility of future enrichment by Iran if it can provide sufficient proof that its program is peaceful.

White House aides said the address was in part meant to serve as a table-setter for discussions about the nuclear standoff with Iran that are expected as part of a broader agenda this week at the United States-European Union summit meeting.

"It's in some way teeing up what is going to be a topic of conversation, one of many, at the European Union consultations this week," Tony Snow, the White House press secretary, told reporters on the way here aboard Air Force One.

The talks about talks with Iran remain in a delicate place. The prospect of a deal hinges on Iran's willingness to drop what it says is its sovereign right to develop nuclear power sources and on how the West will ultimately be willing to define the word "suspend." Some of the negotiating partners have indicated a readiness to allow Iran to keep its centrifuges — which enrich uranium into a form that can fuel reactors or atom bombs — idle but online during talks. The United States has not shown any softening of its stand that the centrifuges must be completely shut down for talks to begin.

Officials signaled that their strategy this week would concentrate more on building a unified front with Europe in pressing Iran to suspend its program than it would on making any breakthrough with Iran.

While stressing unity with Europe, Mr. Bush reprised some of his tougher language about the Iranian political leadership, telling the graduates, "The leaders of Iran sponsor terror, deny liberty and human rights to their people, and threaten the existence of our ally, Israel."

But, tapping into the internal politics of Iran with a message that seemed aimed at its more liberal intellectual classes, Mr. Bush praised its culture and civilization. "Through the centuries, Iranians have achieved distinction in medicine and science and poetry and philosophy, and countless other fields," he said.

Stephen J. Hadley, the national security adviser, said that unless Iran responded to Mr. Bush's offer while he was in Europe, the negotiations were unlikely to produce any developments. "At this point, the next step is really waiting for the response from the Iranian regime," he said.

Mr. Bush would not be able to make great strides on Iran anyway, because he is meeting only with the core of the European Union leadership this week, not heads of state.

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, said Monday that Iran would stand for nothing less than "unconditional" talks, though he continued to keep the door open to talks.

"The Islamic Republic has always wanted to negotiate and have dialogue on equal terms and with no preconditions," state television quoted him as saying during a meeting that included Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But he had also said "the new proposal is a step forward."

North Korea's nuclear ambitions will also certainly be on the president's mind this week, but the United States' main negotiating partners in those talks are not Europeans.

Mr. Bush also intends to use the meeting to press European countries to come to terms on a trade-expanding agreement under the so-called Doha round, named for the city in Qatar where the talks began. He also will call for European leaders to help collect billions of dollars in pledges to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq, as he said after his surprise trip to Baghdad last week that he would do.

"All nations that have pledged money have a responsibility to keep their pledges — and America and Europe will work together to ensure they do so," Mr. Bush said here.

Europeans are pursuing their own agenda, with officials there hinting in the last week that they will probably push Mr. Bush to close the prison in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. He tacitly acknowledged the divisions during his address here, saying, "Others in Europe have had disagreements with our decisions on Iraq." He added, "We agree that the success of a democratic government in Baghdad is vital for the Iraqis and for the security of the world."

Jim Rutenberg reported from Kings Point, N.Y. for this article, and Sheryl Gay Stolberg from Washington.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/20/world/middleeast/20prexy.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Washington Post

June 20, 2006

Pg. 11

U.S., Russia Break Impasse On Plan To Keep Arms From Rogue Users

By Peter Baker, Washington Post Staff Writer

The United States and Russia reached a last-minute agreement saving a program to secure or destroy Soviet nuclear warheads, chemical weapons and killer germs, U.S. officials said yesterday, breaking a long logjam and averting a rupture weeks before President Bush travels to St. Petersburg.

The program, a multibillion-dollar effort designed to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists or rogue states, was set to expire Friday amid a stubborn disagreement over legal provisions. But U.S. and Russian officials cut a deadline deal in Moscow on Friday that will extend the program for seven years and effectively take the issue off the table for Bush's trip.

Although overshadowed by disputes with Iran and North Korea, the Cooperative Threat Reduction program with Russia represents the most expansive disarmament effort in the world and the prospect that it could be halted deeply worried arms-control specialists. The program, which began 14 years ago after the Cold War ended, has deactivated thousands of warheads, missiles and bombers and made progress toward securing biological and chemical weapons. But the work has gone slower than hoped and Russia still maintains thousands of additional aging nuclear warheads as well as vast stockpiles of other weapons that specialists fear are vulnerable to theft or sale on the international black market. U.S. contractors in Russia would have had to shut down activities if Friday's agreement had not been signed by U.S. Ambassador William J. Burns and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Kislyak.

"The extension of the umbrella agreement is critical," said Raphael Della Ratta, a weapons specialist at the Russian American Nuclear Security Advisory Council. Without it, "nuclear weapons delivery systems would not be dismantled, chemical weapons would remain unsecured and undestroyed and biological pathogens would remain unsecured as well."

At the same time, he and other experts have complained that the Bush administration has not shown sufficient urgency about eliminating Russian arms. "We are in a race against time to secure these materials before they're lost, stolen or get into the wrong hands," said Daryl G. Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. "This is a necessary but insufficient step. The administration needs to push down the accelerator in terms of the pace of work."

A senior administration official said the extension should help propel efforts to eliminate old Soviet weapons. "This reinvigorates and strengthens the ongoing cooperation we've been doing with Russia," said the official, who was not authorized to speak on the record.

The extension had been held up for years mainly by a dispute over liability. Under the original agreement, Russia was responsible for any mishaps, even accidents or negligence by U.S. contractors. Russia has balked at that provision. The renewal keeps the original language for current projects but will address Russian concerns for future projects. It does not affect a separate plutonium-disposal program announced in 1998 but never started because of a similar dispute.

A collapse of the Cooperative Threat Reduction program would have marred Bush's visit to St. Petersburg next month for the Group of Eight summit. The meeting will be the group's first held by Russia, which is eager to use the occasion to showcase its reemergence on the world stage as a major power.

Critics say Russia has no business hosting an organization of industrial democracies at a time when President Vladimir Putin has constricted political freedoms at home and used energy resources to flex muscles abroad. Bush has maneuvered to avoid the image that he is endorsing Putin's course by attending the summit.

Vice President Cheney recently criticized Russian actions, and the administration will send two assistant secretaries of state, Daniel Fried and Barry Lowenkron, to a pre-summit meeting to discuss human rights in Russia. Bush also announced yesterday that he will host Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili at the White House shortly before the summit as a statement of solidarity with Russian neighbors under pressure from Moscow.

The Cooperative Threat Reduction agreement was reached in 1992 at the instigation of Sens. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and was renewed in 1999. Since then, it has deactivated or destroyed 6,828 nuclear warheads, 612 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 885 nuclear air-to-surface missiles, 577 submarine-launched missiles, 155 bombers and 29 nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines, among others, according to the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.

But it still has much to do. About half of the nuclear warheads, ICBMs, ICBM silos, submarine-launched missiles and nuclear submarines targeted by the program have yet to be eliminated, according to the agency. A chemical-weapons destruction facility is more than 60 percent unfinished and the Government Accountability Office reported that it may not open by 2009.

Lugar hailed the extension but called on Congress to remove other conditions that threaten the program: "If the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is the number one national security threat facing our country, we cannot permit any delays in our response."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/19/AR2006061901380.html>

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U.S. Readies System For Missile Detection

Use Against N. Korean Launch Discounted

By Thomas E. Ricks and Joohee Cho, Washington Post Staff Writers

The U.S. military yesterday moved ships into position off the coast of North Korea to detect the launch of any long-range ballistic missiles and prepared its new, unproven missile-interception system to attempt a response if necessary.

It was apparently the first time that the U.S. government has readied its rudimentary missile-defense system other than to test it. But officials played down the possibility that the interceptors might be used against a North Korean missile, and the South Korean government expressed doubt that Pyongyang is even preparing a test launch of its first intercontinental missile. It suggested that the government of Kim Jong Il might only be preparing to send a satellite into space.

Han Song Ryol, North Korea's deputy chief of mission at the United Nations, said that Pyongyang has a right to develop and test missiles, but that it would like to ease tensions over the situation through talks, the Yonhap news agency quoted him as saying. "We know that the U.S. is concerned about our missile test launch," the news services quoted Han as having said in a telephone conversation with Yonhap. "Our position is to solve this situation through discussions."

Two U.S. Navy ships with sensors that could swiftly detect and track a missile's flight were operating off the North Korean coast yesterday, a Pentagon official said. They are the USS Curtis Wilbur and the USS Fitzgerald, both Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers based at Yokosuka, Japan.

Also, as part of a long-planned exercise, the Navy has three carrier battle groups operating near Guam in the western Pacific for the first time since the Vietnam War, along with dozens of aircraft, including several heavy bombers. Pentagon officials said that steps had been taken to ready the U.S. interceptors in much the same way that they would proceed for a test of the system -- which is still being built -- because of recent satellite imagery indicating that North Korea might be preparing a test launch.

But they declined to confirm a Washington Times story yesterday that said the system had recently been activated, and that the Bush administration is considering shooting down the North Korean missile.

"The United States has a limited missile-defense system, but I'm not going to discuss status or capabilities," said Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman.

There are nine interceptor missiles based in Alaska and two in California. They are at the core of a complex system that connects launch data from satellites and radars on land and aboard ships, and transmits the data to command-and-control facilities, where senior commanders make decisions about whether to launch interceptors. The system has not successfully intercepted a missile in its current configuration.

U.S. government officials, speaking on the condition of anonymity, played down the likelihood of the new anti-missile system being used in this situation because, they said, it is not yet clear whether North Korea will send a missile aloft -- or if it does, whether it would head anywhere near U.S. territory. Nor would the U.S. government want to risk an embarrassing failure of its system, they said, and it is possible that the missile could carry a satellite into space, rather than arc back to earth.

In Seoul, a South Korean official said his government is skeptical of U.S. intelligence indicating that North Korea is preparing to launch a new, larger version of the Taepodong-2 missile capable of hitting the West Coast of the United States. He said his government is not particularly alarmed by the situation and "doesn't understand why there is such fuss in other countries on this."

He also said it is too early to tell if the North Koreans are trying to launch a satellite or test a missile.

A South Korean parliamentary panel concluded that North Korea "does not seem" to have completed injecting fuel into the missile, citing information from South Korea's National Intelligence Service.

"The NIS reported that it is hard to believe the missiles have been fully fueled already," Rep. Chung Hyung Keun, secretary of the National Assembly's Intelligence Committee, told reporters in Seoul. The lawmaker made the remark after emerging from a briefing by the NIS. "The 40 fuel tanks spotted at the site do not contain enough to launch a missile that needs 65 tons of liquid fuel," the lawmaker said.

National security adviser Stephen J. Hadley appeared to confirm the South Korean account when he told reporters on Air Force One as President Bush flew to Vienna yesterday that "it's hard to tell" if North Korea has fueled the missile.

"They seem to be moving forward towards a launch, but the intelligence is not conclusive at this point," Hadley said.

U.S. officials have examined intelligence that suggests Pyongyang may be preparing to test a Taepodong-2 missile from a remote village on North Korea's northeast coast. They have said U.S. satellites have observed liquid-fuel canisters placed near the missile, but officials said there was no confirmation that the missile had been fueled. Meanwhile, the United States and Japan began negotiations on a draft resolution at the United Nations that would condemn Pyongyang if it conducts a test. The resolution would also demand that Pyongyang observe a 1999 moratorium on missile tests and resume international negotiations over its nuclear weapons program.

U.S. and Japanese diplomats have been laying the groundwork for the resolution in private meetings with members of the Security Council. But council diplomats said that China, which is hosting the stalled six-nation talks over North Korea's nuclear weapons program, has called on the resolution's chief sponsors to water it down. The United States last attempted to take up the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program in 2003, but dropped the effort in the face of Chinese opposition.

An expert on ballistic missile proliferation, Henry D. Sokolski, said U.S. diplomatic efforts are too limited because North Korea is hardly being punished for its actions.

"We must make sure that others see that this is not a model to follow," said Sokolski, a former Pentagon official. "I am sure the Iranians are watching this very, very closely."

Cho reported from Seoul. Correspondent Anthony Faiola in Tokyo and staff writers Glenn Kessler in Washington and Colum Lynch at the United Nations contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/20/AR2006062001446.html>

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New York Times

June 21, 2006

North Korea Disavows Its Moratorium On Testing Of Long-Range Missiles

By Helene Cooper and Michael R. Gordon

WASHINGTON, June 20 — North Korea said Tuesday that it was not bound by its own moratorium on long-range missile tests, as tension over the country's missile intentions continued to mount.

In Washington, a senior State Department official challenged the interpretation, saying the United States expected the North Korean government to abide by its commitments.

An official of that government's Foreign Ministry told Japanese reporters that a missile test would not be "bound by any statement such as the Pyongyang declaration," the Japanese news agency Kyodo reported. The agency quoted the official, Ri Pyong Dok, as saying: "This issue concerns our autonomy. Nobody has a right to slander that right."

The declaration was signed in 2002 by the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il, and the Japanese prime minister, Junichiro Koizumi. In it, North Korea pledged to extend a moratorium on its test launchings of longrange ballistic missiles.

But that agreement is something less than a binding treaty.

The North agreed to the moratorium in 1999. Charles Kartman, the United States special envoy who negotiated it with the North Koreans, said the understanding had been worked out on the assumption that the two countries would conduct further talks on an American proposal to ban the testing, production and export of long-range North Korean missiles. But such negotiations have not been held since 2000.

"The moratorium was to be in effect only so long as the two sides were engaged in missile talks," Mr. Kartman said in an interview. "The Bush administration's disinterest in continuing the missile negotiations would have, of course, canceled out the 1999 moratorium."

[Because of the current tensions, former President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea, who orchestrated an unprecedented summit meeting with Kim Jong Il in 2000, cancelled a trip to Pyongyang planned for next week, Jeong Fe Hyun, the former reunification minister, said Wednesday in Seoul, Reuters reported. Mr. Kim had hoped to use the meeting to reopen six-party talks.]

As part of the separate 2002 understanding with the Japanese, the North Koreans agreed to extend the moratorium on missile tests. In a joint declaration with Japan, North Korea "expressed its will to extend its moratorium on missile tests beyond 2003 in the spirit of the declaration," according to an English-language translation of the declaration.

The Bush administration has taken the position that both moratoriums are still in effect. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday that the United States would regard a missile launching as an "abrogation of obligations that North Korea undertook in the moratorium that they signed on to in 1999, that they reiterated in 2002."

The issue of the moratorium emerged along with reports that the United States has raised the alert status of its ground-based missile defense system. The Pentagon has deployed 11 missile interceptors in a test status in Alaska and California and has not conducted a successful interception test in four years.

Nonetheless, the Pentagon has asserted that the missiles could be activated if international events warranted and noted that several tests in which a target is to be intercepted are scheduled for this year and early next year. Pentagon officials refused to discuss the current status of the system. "We have a limited missile-defense system," said Eric Ruff, the Pentagon spokesman. "We don't discuss the alert status or the specific capabilities." The Washington Times reported Tuesday that the system had been activated.

Missile defense proponents said North Korea's missile preparations would strengthen the case for building more robust missile defenses. "I think the activity by North Korea clearly makes the case that a missile defense is necessary for American security," said Representative Duncan Hunter, the California Republican who is chairman of the House Armed Service Committee.

Critics asserted that the missile defense was an illusory shield against a threat that had yet to materialize. "The system being declared operational is no more than a scarecrow, incapable of fooling anyone except perhaps some members of the administration who want to pretend to be defending the country against a North Korean missile attack," said Robert G. Gard, a retired Army lieutenant general and a senior fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Nonproliferation.

Diplomatic efforts to stop North Korea from launching what American officials believe is a two-stage Taepodong 2 missile continued on Tuesday. Secretary General Kofi Annan of the United Nations called for a halt to test preparations. "I hope that the leaders of North Korea will listen to and hear what the world is saying," he said. "We are all worried."

[A top North Korean official has offered talks with the United States on the plans for a missile test, indicating that a launching could be put off, Agence France-Presse reported in Seoul, South Korea, on Wednesday. "The United States says it is concerned about our missile test launch," Han Song Ryol, the deputy chief of North Korea's mission to the United Nations, told the Yonhap news agency, according to A.F.P. "Our position is, O.K., then, let's talk about it."]

There has been some concern in the United States that North Korea might seek to justify the missile firing as part of a civilian space program. But American officials say that even such a launching would violate the 2002 moratorium, since the technology used to put satellites into orbit is easily transferable to intercontinental missiles. The North Koreans described their last significant test in 1998 as an effort to launch a satellite.

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/21/world/asia/21korea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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USA Today
June 21, 2006
Pg. 6

U.S. Still Working Kinks Out Of Defense Shield

By Matt Kelley, USA Today

WASHINGTON — As the Bush administration warns North Korea not to test a long-range missile, the U.S. missile-defense system remains a patchy and unproven shield, government studies and outside experts say. President Bush ordered the Pentagon to start fielding prototype anti-missile rockets in 2004 to have at least some chance of destroying an intercontinental missile heading for the USA. Although there are 10 of those interceptors on bases in Alaska and California, their hurried deployment prevented complete testing and contributed to technical glitches and manufacturing problems, congressional investigators reported this year. "Our system is still developing," Pentagon spokesman Eric Ruff said Tuesday. "It's a limited missile-defense system right now."

Ruff and other Defense Department officials would not confirm reports by The Washington Times and Reuters that the missile-defense system had been switched to operational mode. "It's not like we can press a button and go on alert," spokesman Lt. Col. Brian Maka said.

The Pentagon now spends about \$8 billion a year toward development of a network of systems designed to destroy enemy missiles, particularly those from Iran and North Korea. One of the most developed parts of that system is the handful of ground-based missile interceptors at Fort Greely in Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. The interceptor rockets are meant to boost a "kill vehicle" into space, where its own sensors and ground-based radars would guide it to smash into an oncoming missile at 15,000 mph. The last successful test of the idea was in 2002.

Those interceptors have never been fully tested under real-world conditions, and the past two tests fizzled when the interceptors failed to launch.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, the Missile Defense Agency's commander, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in April that he was confident the interceptors still provided "an initial defensive capability" despite the manufacturing problems blamed for the aborted tests. He said he had suspended testing and reviewed the program because of the failures.

"I believe we are back on track, but we will pause again if necessary," Obering said.

Philip Coyle, a longtime critic of the missile-defense program, said there's no firm evidence the interceptors would work against a North Korean missile. If North Korea test-fires a missile to the south, it would be out of range of the system anyway, said Coyle, a former director of weapons testing for the Pentagon.

"Suppose North Korea launches a missile and the MDA tried to shoot it down, and like in some of the recent tests, it failed," Coyle said. "It would be totally embarrassing. It would cause a huge uproar in Congress."

The ground-based missile-defense component was over budget by more than \$365 million last year and delivered fewer interceptors than planned without proof they would work, according to a review by the Government Accountability Office this year. Inadequate oversight could have allowed some shoddy parts to be installed in the interceptors, the report said.

Rep. Duncan Hunter, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, says a limited anti-missile capability is better than none at all. The California Republican said the system is worth the billions spent.

"We're going to have to be able to stop an incoming ballistic missile," Hunter said. "That's a truth that liberals are going to have to accept."

Rep. Ellen Tauscher, a California Democrat on the Armed Services panel, dismissed Hunter's statement. "We want something that works," she said.

Contributing: Tom Vanden Brook

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060621/a_missile21.art.htm

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Los Angeles Times

June 21, 2006

Pg. 1

News Analysis

Few Moves Left With N. Korea

U.S. isn't likely to make a preemptive strike in the missile standoff, and holds little sway.

By Barbara Demick, Times Staff Writer

SEOUL — The Bush administration has limited options to prevent North Korea from test-firing a multistage missile that could reach U.S. interests in the Pacific.

In many ways, a missile deployment could constitute grounds for a preemptive attack, such as an airstrike against North Korea. But that is unlikely to be considered a serious option given the U.S. entanglement in Iraq and objections from China.

China and Russia's ties to North Korea also make it unlikely that the United Nations Security Council could inflict meaningful punishment on the regime in Pyongyang. South Korea has signaled it would not go along with efforts to economically isolate its estranged neighbor in retaliation for a launch.

The Bush administration already has measures in place to stanch the flow of illicit money to Pyongyang through offshore banks in Macao and to block North Korean shipping. Yet the North Korean regime continues to thumb its nose at the U.S. campaign against weapons of mass destruction.

Since September, it has boycotted six-party talks aimed at dismantlement of its nuclear program, and the coaxing and threatening from the United States have been to little avail.

"Kim Jong Il is calling the Bush administration's bluff," said Daniel Pinkston, a North Korea specialist with the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey. "The U.S. is already doing everything it can do in terms of economic pressure."

For weeks, U.S., Japanese and South Korean intelligence satellites have observed trucks delivering missile parts and fuel to the Musudan-ri missile base on North Korea's east coast. The North has made no effort to conceal the activities.

The new missile seems to be a souped-up version of the Taepodong 1, which North Korea tested in 1998. That launch demonstrated that the country, despite its impoverishment, had far more sophisticated technology than anyone thought.

The missile — called the Taepodong 2 — is thought to be capable of reaching U.S. bases in Japan, the U.S. territory of Guam and possibly Alaska or Hawaii.

North Korea's nuclear program has been up and running since 2002, when Pyongyang pulled out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The CIA now believes the country has enough fissile material for eight to 10 nuclear weapons.

Although North Korea probably cannot yet mount a nuclear warhead on a missile, most experts believe it is working rapidly to develop such capabilities.

"If there ever was a case in which preemption would be logical, it would be this moment — but this is not where the political priorities are of the Bush administration right now," said a U.S.-based North Korea analyst who asked not to be quoted by name.

He contrasted the position of the U.S. and Japan in this situation with the airstrikes Israel made in 1981 to destroy an Iraqi nuclear plant under construction.

"If Japan were Israel, you know what would happen," the analyst said.

But when asked whether the United States would shoot down a missile, J. Thomas Schieffer, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, said in Tokyo today, "The U.S. has options available to it that it did not have in the past, and these options are on the table." He did not elaborate.

The U.S. hesitancy has a lot to do with horrific memories of the 1950-53 Korean War, in which China and the U.S. fought over the Korean peninsula at a cost of more than a million deaths and a ravaged land.

South Koreans are particularly fearful, and officials have had little to say publicly other than bland admonishments against a missile test, while privately downplaying the threat.

"If there is a missile test, the South Koreans will carry on business as usual," said Kim Tae-woo, a South Korean analyst at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses. "They will not participate in any international effort to isolate North Korea."

North Korean officials have reportedly told the South that the missile is a civilian experiment designed to put a satellite into orbit. They made the same claim in 1998 after a test of a Taepodong 1 missile over Japan.

Although the U.S. is unlikely to buy the story, the ambiguity might be enough to muddle the debate over retaliatory action.

Given the limited options, the Bush administration is stuck taking the same tack it has in the wrangling over North Korea's nuclear program — asking China to lean on Pyongyang.

President Bush is believed to have called Chinese President Hu Jintao at least once over the last month because of the missile test. Almost all of North Korea's trade comes through China, making it the only country with real economic clout in this case.

Tokyo also has limited economic leverage over North Korea, leaving it with little to threaten other than asking for U.N. Security Council sanctions.

Most of Japan's actions appear aimed at voters at home, where there is simmering anger over the kidnappings of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s by North Korean security services. The Japanese government Friday passed a law requiring economic sanctions against Pyongyang if no progress is made on resolving questions about the fate of those abductees still believed to be missing.

After the 1998 missile launch, many threats were voiced against North Korea with little result.

President Clinton circumvented objections from Congress a few months afterward to fund a program to supply North Korea with heavy fuel oil. When Kim Jong Il agreed to a missile-testing moratorium the following year and again in 2002, North Korea received aid from Japan.

Andrei Lankov, a North Korea scholar based in Seoul, notes that North Korea's missile-testing moratorium has since expired and that there may be little in international law to prevent Pyongyang from doing a test launch.

He advises that the Bush administration's best bet in a no-win situation might be to "ignore the North Koreans."

"Too much of a fuss will only make things worse," Lankov said.

Times staff writer Bruce Wallace in Tokyo contributed to this report.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-assess21jun21.1,1406447.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Washington Post

June 21, 2006

Pg. 15

Iran's Gray Area On Nuclear Arms

Despite Official Assertions That Islam Requires a Ban, Some Clerics See Justification

By Karl Vick, Washington Post Foreign Service

TEHRAN -- Iranian officials often assert the peaceful intent of their nuclear program by insisting that the religious law that governs their country expressly prohibits weapons of mass destruction.

A Turkish diplomat, describing a visit in May by the chief Iranian nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, said that Larijani made the religious roots of the proscription clear. "I was in the meeting," said the diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "He said there is even a fatwa, a religious ruling, since the time of Khomeini, that Iran will not produce any nuclear weapons."

Yet interviews with a range of clerics and other students of Islamic teachings indicate that while Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini indeed barred Iranian forces from unconventional weapons during the 1980-88 war with Iraq, the religious underpinning for such a ban is regarded as less than absolute, with ample justification available in scriptures for almost any course except first use.

"This question is ambiguous," said Grand Ayatollah Jalalodine Taheri, who was a leading figure in the Iranian government before becoming a sharp critic. Taheri, 80, said during an interview at his bedside in the central Iranian city of Isfahan that "taking weapons of mass destruction as a whole, I'm against it." But he added that religious texts might offer avenues that would allow stockpiling such weapons in the name of deterrence or self-defense.

"It's not clear," Taheri said.

Those arguing for the loopholes include clerics closely identified with the country's most hard-line conservatives, the most ardent defenders of Iran's theocratic system.

"Producing and using WMD is forbidden, just as producing deadly poison or harmful drugs," said Mohsen Gharavian, who teaches Islamic philosophy in the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran. "I think there is no ambiguity here. . . . I have not seen any other type of interpretation" among religious scholars.

"But," he continued, "I have got to add something to this: If any other nation has produced this WMD and has used it against a second nation, the second nation in the name of defending itself has the right to have it and to use WMD."

Gharavian serves as spokesman for Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, an archconservative who strongly supports President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and is suspected of providing religious justification for killings allegedly carried out by Iranian intelligence agents in the late 1990s. Gharavian spoke in an hour-long interview at the Imam Khomeini Institute, which has produced tens of thousands of clerics under Mesbah-Yazdi's tutelage. A number are expected to seek election this fall to the Assembly of Experts, the one body in Iran's theocratic system with the power to remove the supreme leader, the cleric who has ultimate authority.

"About nuclear weapons, there is this principle of all or none," Gharavian said. "If a nation arms itself with such weapons, it is quite logical for other nations to think of defending themselves against these kinds of weapons."

"I believe this is the logic of Islamic morals," Gharavian said, professing himself "100 percent sure" that Khomeini and Iran's current supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, "based on Islamic principles, have the same logic: Islam does not allow anyone to initiate harming a human being."

The same bedrock view and the same caveat about self-defense were offered by an influential cleric aligned with Iran's reformers, members of the relatively liberal movement recently sidelined by hard-line conservatives.

"In the time of the prophet, we didn't have nuclear bombs, so there's not a verse about it in the Koran," said Mohsen Kadivar, who like Gharavian is a middle-ranking cleric. "But we have some verses which say we can't kill anyone who hasn't committed a crime. It's very, very clear."

The faith does accept the concept of retaliation, however, so long as it stops short of injuring innocents. Kadivar said that proviso appears to proscribe actual use of weapons of mass destruction, as would scriptures warning against damaging the environment.

But none of that necessarily bars a government from stockpiling such weapons, the clerics say.

"From all I can see, it's not forbidden, but it's hard to say it's allowed. In jurisprudence these terms are different," Kadivar said. "If your enemies have these bombs, it's not forbidden to have them."

"Don't forget that Israel has these bombs," he added, raising a finger. "It's outside the Non-Proliferation Treaty."

Iranian scholars who argue against nuclear weapons point out that these questions are hardly abstract in Iran. The newly minted government faced severe, real-life tests after Saddam Hussein's troops invaded Iran in 1980. The Iraqi forces used chemical weapons on the battlefield; two decades later, badly wounded survivors still populate hospital wards in Iran.

When Iraq also launched rocket attacks on Tehran and other metropolitan areas, pressure for Tehran to retaliate was intense.

"In the eight-year war with Iraq, this was a very hot debate among all the Islamic teachers, because Iranian cities were being bombarded," said Kazem Mosavi Bojnoordi, who sat on the defense committee of Iran's parliament during part of the war. "The conclusion was that it's not allowed. Never during those eight years do we have one example of Iran bombarding cities."

Bojnoordi, now chief editor of Iran's Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, recalled that after the first salvos from Iraq, a senior Iranian commander declared, "Now we will flatten Baghdad." The comment brought an immediate rebuke from Khomeini, whose fatwa closed the matter for the balance of the war.

"According to Islamic teachings, there's the principle that the goals never justify the means," said Bojnoordi, whose father was a grand ayatollah. "It has not been supported in Islam that you can do whatever you want to defend yourself. You are not allowed to gather weapons that are not allowed by Islam, even against your enemies."

Senior Iranian officials insist their goal is only electrical power, saving their substantial petroleum deposits to export. Leaders also emphasize the role of pride and technological achievement, which inside Iran conveys the impression of economic development that has largely eluded a population that has grown poorer since the 1979 revolution.

"I believe that by getting high tech we will be getting development," Bojnoordi said. "If we improve the standard of living, that will unite the people, and that will bring security."

Said Kadivar: "I hope that science in my country is so progressive! I hope it's true. Every Iranian wants to have this energy. Every party. The difficulty is we don't have a democratic regime. So we should try to democratize."

If Iran is indeed working to produce nuclear weapons, experts say the program would surely be entrusted to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Formed in 1979 by clerics who did not trust Iran's existing army, the Revolutionary Guards have grown into a major force in Iran's economy and political offices. Their insignia, one analyst noted, includes a passage from the Koran that reads, "Prepare any strength you can muster against them, and any cavalry with which you can overawe God's enemy and your own enemy as well, plus others besides them whom you do not know."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/20/AR2006062001584.html>

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Los Angeles Times

June 22, 2006

Pg. 1

For N. Korean Missile, U.S. Defense Is Hit Or Miss

By Peter Spiegel, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration has spent nearly \$43 billion over the last five years on missile defense systems, but with North Korea poised to launch its most advanced missile yet, U.S. government assessments and investigative reports indicate little confidence in the centerpiece portion of the program.

Eleven ground-based interceptors in Alaska and at Vandenberg Air Force Base in Central California, the cornerstone of the administration's new system, have not undergone a successful test in nearly four years and have been beset by glitches that investigators blame, at least in part, on President Bush's order in 2002 to make the program operational even before it had been fully tested.

In all, the interceptors hit dummy missiles in five out of 10 tests, but these were under controlled conditions that critics say do not reflect the challenges of an actual missile launch.

A little-noticed study by the Government Accountability Office issued in March found that program officials were so concerned with potential flaws in the first nine interceptors now in operation that they considered taking them out of their silos and returning them to the manufacturer for "disassembly and remanufacture."

"Quality control procedures may not have been rigorous enough to ensure that unreliable parts, or parts that were inappropriate for space applications, would be removed from the manufacturing process," the report says.

Since Bush took office in 2001, the ballistic missile defense system has been one of the administration's most controversial military priorities, advancing an array of programs designed to down enemy missiles in various stages of flight.

In recent days, Pentagon officials have remained coy about the capabilities and alert status of the system, leading to speculation that they may be preparing to try to shoot down the North Korean missile, believed to be the first trial of a long-range Taepodong 2. The missile is thought to be capable of reaching U.S. bases in Japan, the U.S. territory of Guam and possibly Alaska or Hawaii.

The problems in the ground-based system, as well as the ongoing expense of the war in Iraq, have not damped the administration's enthusiasm for the program. The Pentagon has requested \$10.4 billion for missile defense in next year's budget, which would be its largest annual grant to date. And according to the GAO, the Pentagon plans to spend \$58 billion, or 14% of its research budget, on missile defense over the next six years.

The vast majority of funding has gone to the ground-based interceptor system, designed to take out long-range missiles as they arc toward a target. Interceptors are rockets that have missile-seeking devices to destroy incoming weapons.

In addition to the interceptors, nine at Ft. Greely in Alaska and the other two in California, the system includes a series of complex radar upgrades and a sophisticated command system that enables all the components to interact. The ground-based system has received most of the attention and funding. But missile defense systems based on Navy ships equipped with sophisticated Aegis radars, which have proved more successful in testing, have been winning a growing share of the funding, at least in part because of the ground-based devices' failures. The U.S. military's most high-profile involvement in any North Korean launch is likely to come from the Aegis-equipped destroyers that patrol the coastal waters off the Korean peninsula. But the purpose of the radars is to track enemy missiles rather than to shoot them down.

The U.S. first sent a destroyer with Aegis radars upgraded for tracking ballistic missile launches into international waters near North Korea in October 2004, when the guided missile destroyer Curtis Wilbur was deployed as part of the Navy's first missile defense mission.

None of the destroyers are equipped with rockets that can shoot down enemy missiles, said Dave Kier, who oversees the Aegis missile defense system for prime contractor Lockheed Martin. Instead, they are used to feed real-time data on missile launches to the U.S. Strategic Command, the Pentagon division responsible for all missile defense systems.

Three larger Navy cruisers — the Shiloh, Lake Erie, and Port Royal — are equipped with antimissile rockets, but they are not expected to be directly involved in any response to North Korea's possible launch.

These rockets are being developed to combat shorter-range rockets rather than intercontinental ballistic missiles such as the Taepodong 2.

For its part, the Shiloh is scheduled to undergo a test to shoot down a decoy missile launched from Hawaii today.

Unlike the ground-based system, cruisers have hit their targets in six of seven previous tests.

Pentagon officials said today's test had been scheduled for months and was not related to the current standoff with North Korea.

Because of the repeated misses by the ground-based system — including back-to-back attempts just over a year ago in which the interceptors failed to launch — Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry A. Obering, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, suspended all ground-based tests early last year.

He ordered two separate teams — one internal and one run by three outside experts — to investigate the glitches. In December, an interceptor missile was launched without problem, but it was not aimed at a dummy missile.

In spring, Obering signed off on a new test schedule for the ground-based system. The first test was planned for summer, and a spokesman said the move was a sign that Obering now believed the interceptors were back on track. During testimony on Capitol Hill last month, Obering said that although the system was not yet on alert, "if we had to use the system in an emergency, I fully believe that it would work."

But the Government Accountability Office study and a similar study issued in February by the Pentagon's internal Operational Test and Evaluation office, a department created to take independent looks at the military's biggest weapons programs, paint a far less optimistic picture.

The annual Pentagon report says "there is insufficient evidence to support a confident assessment" of the latest components installed in the system. The report does, however, praise Obering for overhauling the program.

The GAO is even more skeptical in its assessment, saying that even though individual technologies involved in knocking a long-range missile out of the sky have been tested, the agency has yet to prove that the full system works.

Much of the trouble, both the GAO and Operational Test and Evaluation Office reports argue, can be tied to the administration's decision to push the system into operation even as it was being developed. In December 2002, Bush ordered the Missile Defense Agency to develop a limited capability in Alaska by 2004, a process that authorized the Pentagon to field components before they were fully tested.

Both the Missile Defense Agency and the GAO have laid some of the blame on Boeing, the ground-based program's lead contractor. Obering docked Boeing \$107 million in bonuses last year for the failures, though both the company and the Defense Agency say relations have improved since the move in February. A Boeing statement said the company had revamped and improved its oversight processes, but the GAO was still projecting significant cost overruns.

The most troubling failure appears to be potential glitches in the interceptors. The Government Accountability Office said officials involved in the ground-based system recommended that the Missile Defense Agency remove the first nine interceptors entirely, after concerns that the rockets may contain parts that are not "adequately reliable" or "appropriate for use in space."

The agency has agreed to take them out of their silos to check the parts, but not before the missiles go through scheduled upgrades next year. That would mean that the first test since the hiatus, which will be the first at Vandenberg, will involve a suspect interceptor missile.

"It's not a perfect system; it never will be," said one person familiar with the issues involved, speaking on condition of anonymity while discussing internal deliberations. Officials are debating whether the system now is good enough to provide "a high probability" of success, he said.

"They're some who think that it is, and some think it isn't."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missile22jun22,0.7670402.story?coll=la-home-world>

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Washington Post

June 22, 2006

Pg. 1

Iran And N. Korea Cautioned At Summit

Bush, E.U. Leaders Demonstrate Unity

By Michael Abramowitz, Washington Post Staff Writer

VIENNA, June 21 -- President Bush and European Union leaders jointly prodded Iran and North Korea on Wednesday to back off from controversial weapons technology. The show of governmental unity came as anti-American demonstrators rallied nearby and Bush dismissed as "absurd" the suggestion that the United States is more of a threat than the two countries he once described as part of an "axis of evil."

Bush warned Iran to speed up consideration of a package of inducements being offered if the Tehran government suspends uranium enrichment, a key step toward possible development of nuclear weapons. And he demanded that North Korea refrain from test-firing a long-range missile that intelligence agencies say has been placed on a launch pad.

"It should make people nervous when non-transparent regimes who have announced they have nuclear warheads fire missiles," Bush said. "This is not the way peaceful nations conduct their affairs."

On both issues, Bush drew a strong endorsement from Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schuessel, following a summit here among U.S. and E.U. leaders. Schuessel, whose country holds the E.U.'s revolving presidency, said Europe would back the United States if North Korea violates international rules.

Schuessel also told Iran that it should quickly accept a recent U.S.-E.U. offer, which holds out the prospect of direct talks with the United States if Iran suspends uranium enrichment.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Wednesday that his country would respond to the incentive offer by mid-August. Bush told reporters here that "it shouldn't take the Iranians that long to analyze what's a reasonable deal."

In Vienna, the tone between the summit leaders was friendly, a sign of the warming relations between European governments and the Bush administration since the fallout over the Iraq war. Although protesters railed against Bush outside the walls of the Hofburg Palace, inside the president seemed relaxed as he offered a passionate defense of his foreign policy since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Several thousand Austrian police officers helped keep the peace in a city that one newspaper here described as a "fortress." Police estimated there were 15,000 demonstrators around the city.

Bush seemed most animated when a European journalist asked about a belief of many Europeans that the United States is the biggest threat to global stability.

"That's absurd," Bush replied curtly.

"We'll defend ourselves," he added, "but at the same time we're actively working with our partners to spread peace and democracy."

Bush picked up on the theme a few moments later, after an Austrian journalist raised the subject of recent opinion polls indicating that the image of America is falling around the world. The president said he had vowed after those terrorist attacks that he would "do everything to defend our people."

"For Europe, September 11th was a moment," Bush said. "For us, it was a change of thinking."

Schuessel rose to Bush's defense, recalling the American support for European reconstruction after World War II and saying Europeans "should not be naive" about the necessity of tough action against terrorists, in view of attacks on the continent. He said the suggestion that the United States was worse than Iran and North Korea was "grotesque."

Schuessel also said: "We can only have a victory in the fight against terror if we don't undermine our common values. It can never be a victory, a credible victory over terrorists if we give up our values: democracy, rule of law, individual rights."

That was a reference to allegations of wrongdoing by the United States in its open-ended detention of terrorism suspects. Many European governments want the prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to be closed right away.

Many European officials expected Schuessel to raise the Guantanamo issue with Bush, but Schuessel and U.S. officials said it was Bush who broached the subject, in an apparent effort to preempt their concerns. As described by U.S. officials, Bush did not break new ground on the subject in the private meetings, repeating his general desire to close the facility. He outlined what the U.S. government considers the practical problems involved in returning large numbers of detainees to their home countries and noted that he was waiting for a Supreme Court decision on the administration's plan for military commissions to try detainees.

"There are some who need to be tried in U.S. courts," Bush said at the news conference. "They're cold-blooded killers. They will murder somebody if they are let out on the street."

Schuessel voiced understanding, though not necessarily agreement, with the president's statement. "We got clear, clear signals and a commitment from the American side -- no torture, no extraordinary or extra-territorial positions to deal with the terrorists," he said. U.S. officials said later that Bush only restated long-standing U.S. positions. The meetings Wednesday were part of a continuing effort by Bush since his reelection in 2004 to rebuild relations with Europe. In the clearest sign of this, the administration has worked with France, Germany, Britain and the E.U. as they have taken the lead on the new diplomatic initiative to persuade Iran to restrict its nuclear program. Russian and European diplomats had asked Iran to respond to the proposal by mid-July, ahead of a summit by the Group of Eight industrialized nations in St. Petersburg, Russia. U.S. officials were hoping for a response by the end of June.

It was unclear Wednesday why the Iranians were seeking an additional month. Some U.S. and European officials speculated privately that the Iranians might be trying to complete a second centrifuge array known as a cascade before suspending their nuclear program for talks. Others say they believe the Tehran government simply has not been able to reach an internal consensus on how to negotiate with the West. Iran maintains that its nuclear program is solely to generate electricity.

Bush is the first U.S. president to visit Austria since Jimmy Carter in 1979. Though he was on the ground here for less than 24 hours, he found time for a little sightseeing, touring the Austrian National Library and hearing a performance by the Vienna Boys Choir.

Later Wednesday, Bush flew to Budapest, the capital of Hungary. He has frequently visited the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe, and his press secretary, Tony Snow, said that on this occasion he would offer an homage to the unsuccessful 1956 Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule and its relevance to his effort to spread democracy today.

Staff writer Dafna Linzer in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/21/AR2006062100277.html>

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Washington Post

June 22, 2006

Pg. 10

Lawmakers Cite Weapons Found In Iraq

Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.), chairman of the House intelligence committee, and Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) told reporters yesterday that weapons of mass destruction had in fact been found in Iraq, despite acknowledgments by the White House and the insistence of the intelligence community that no such weapons had been discovered.

"We have found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, chemical weapons," Santorum said.

The lawmakers pointed to an unclassified summary from a report by the National Ground Intelligence Center regarding 500 chemical munitions shells that had been buried near the Iranian border, and then long forgotten, by Iraqi troops during their eight-year war with Iran, which ended in 1988.

The U.S. military announced in 2004 in Iraq that several crates of the old shells had been uncovered and that they contained a blister agent that was no longer active. Neither the military nor the White House nor the CIA considered the shells to be evidence of what was alleged by the Bush administration to be a current Iraqi program to make chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

Last night, intelligence officials reaffirmed that the shells were old and were not the suspected weapons of mass destruction sought in Iraq after the 2003 invasion.

-- Dafna Linzer

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/21/AR2006062101837.html>

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Chemical Arms Found In Iraq, Report Reveals

From combined dispatches

U.S.-led coalition forces in Iraq have found about 500 chemical weapons since the March 2003 invasion, with more thought to exist, according to portions of an intelligence report made public yesterday.

"Since 2003, Coalition forces have recovered approximately 500 weapons munitions which contain degraded mustard or sarin nerve agent," said an overview of the report, which was declassified at the behest of Sen. Rick Santorum, Pennsylvania Republican, and Rep. Peter Hoekstra, Michigan Republican and head of the House intelligence committee.

"Despite many efforts to locate and destroy Iraq's pre-Gulf war chemical munitions, filled and unfilled pre-Gulf war chemical munitions are assessed to still exist," according to the report.

The two Republican lawmakers said the report validates one key U.S. rationale for the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

"We have found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq," Mr. Santorum said in a press conference yesterday afternoon.

"This is an incredibly ... significant finding. The idea that, as my colleagues have repeatedly said in this debate on the other side of the aisle, that there are no weapons of mass destruction, is in fact false."

A Pentagon official who confirmed the findings to Agence France-Presse that all the weapons were pre-1991 munitions "in such a degraded state they couldn't be used for what they are designed for." The official, who asked not to be identified, said most were 155mm artillery projectiles with mustard gas or sarin of varying degrees of potency.

But a counterterrorism adviser to the U.S. government told The Washington Times that even imperfect chemical munitions could be rigged for improvised use, as Iraqi insurgents have used artillery shells as roadside bombs. The adviser also said that the unclassified sections of the report do not suggest, and there's no sure way to tell, whether the gas had been degrading for the three years since the fall of Saddam or the 15 years since he agreed to give up his weapons of mass destruction.

The two-month-old report by the National Ground Intelligence Center, a military intelligence agency that started looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when the Iraq Survey Group stopped doing so in late 2004, stressed that the pre-Gulf War Iraqi chemical weapons could be sold on the black market.

"It has been reported in open press that insurgents and Iraqi groups desire to acquire and use chemical weapons," the report said.

The counterterrorism adviser noted that Saddam needed fewer than 20 such munitions to kill an estimated 5,000 Kurds in Halabjah in 1988.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060621-114414-3312r.htm>

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If Necessary, Strike And Destroy

North Korea Cannot Be Allowed to Test This Missile

By Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry

North Korean technicians are reportedly in the final stages of fueling a long-range ballistic missile that some experts estimate can deliver a deadly payload to the United States. The last time North Korea tested such a missile, in 1998, it sent a shock wave around the world, but especially to the United States and Japan, both of which North Korea regards as archenemies. They recognized immediately that a missile of this type makes no sense as a weapon unless it is intended for delivery of a nuclear warhead.

A year later North Korea agreed to a moratorium on further launches, which it upheld -- until now. But there is a critical difference between now and 1998. Today North Korea openly boasts of its nuclear deterrent, has obtained six to eight bombs' worth of plutonium since 2003 and is plunging ahead to make more in its Yongbyon reactor. The six-party talks aimed at containing North Korea's weapons of mass destruction have collapsed.

Should the United States allow a country openly hostile to it and armed with nuclear weapons to perfect an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of delivering nuclear weapons to U.S. soil? We believe not. The Bush administration has unwisely ballyhooed the doctrine of "preemption," which all previous presidents have sustained

as an option rather than a dogma. It has applied the doctrine to Iraq, where the intelligence pointed to a threat from weapons of mass destruction that was much smaller than the risk North Korea poses. (The actual threat from Saddam Hussein was, we now know, even smaller than believed at the time of the invasion.) But intervening before mortal threats to U.S. security can develop is surely a prudent policy.

Therefore, if North Korea persists in its launch preparations, the United States should immediately make clear its intention to strike and destroy the North Korean Taepodong missile before it can be launched. This could be accomplished, for example, by a cruise missile launched from a submarine carrying a high-explosive warhead. The blast would be similar to the one that killed terrorist leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq. But the effect on the Taepodong would be devastating. The multi-story, thin-skinned missile filled with high-energy fuel is itself explosive -- the U.S. airstrike would puncture the missile and probably cause it to explode. The carefully engineered test bed for North Korea's nascent nuclear missile force would be destroyed, and its attempt to retrogress to Cold War threats thwarted. There would be no damage to North Korea outside the immediate vicinity of the missile gantry.

The U.S. military has announced that it has placed some of the new missile defense interceptors deployed in Alaska and California on alert. In theory, the antiballistic missile system might succeed in smashing into the Taepodong payload as it hurtled through space after the missile booster burned out. But waiting until North Korea's ICBM is launched to interdict it is risky. First, by the time the payload was intercepted, North Korean engineers would already have obtained much of the precious flight test data they are seeking, which they could use to make a whole arsenal of missiles, hiding and protecting them from more U.S. strikes in the maze of tunnels they have dug throughout their mountainous country. Second, the U.S. defensive interceptor could reach the target only if it was flying on a test trajectory that took it into the range of the U.S. defense. Third, the U.S. system is unproven against North Korean missiles and has had an uneven record in its flight tests. A failed attempt at interception could undermine whatever deterrent value our missile defense may have.

We should not conceal our determination to strike the Taepodong if North Korea refuses to drain the fuel out and take it back to the warehouse. When they learn of it, our South Korean allies will surely not support this ultimatum - indeed they will vigorously oppose it. The United States should accordingly make clear to the North that the South will play no role in the attack, which can be carried out entirely with U.S. forces and without use of South Korean territory. South Korea has worked hard to counter North Korea's 50-year menacing of its own country, through both military defense and negotiations, and the United States has stood with the South throughout. South Koreans should understand that U.S. territory is now also being threatened, and we must respond. Japan is likely to welcome the action but will also not lend open support or assistance. China and Russia will be shocked that North Korea's recklessness and the failure of the six-party talks have brought things to such a pass, but they will not defend North Korea.

In addition to warning our allies and partners of our determination to take out the Taepodong before it can be launched, we should warn the North Koreans. There is nothing they could do with such warning to defend the bulky, vulnerable missile on its launch pad, but they could evacuate personnel who might otherwise be harmed. The United States should emphasize that the strike, if mounted, would not be an attack on the entire country, or even its military, but only on the missile that North Korea pledged not to launch -- one designed to carry nuclear weapons. We should sharply warn North Korea against further escalation.

North Korea could respond to U.S. resolve by taking the drastic step of threatening all-out war on the Korean Peninsula. But it is unlikely to act on that threat. Why attack South Korea, which has been working to improve North-South relations (sometimes at odds with the United States) and which was openly opposing the U.S. action? An invasion of South Korea would bring about the certain end of Kim Jong Il's regime within a few bloody weeks of war, as surely he knows. Though war is unlikely, it would be prudent for the United States to enhance deterrence by introducing U.S. air and naval forces into the region at the same time it made its threat to strike the Taepodong. If North Korea opted for such a suicidal course, these extra forces would make its defeat swifter and less costly in lives -- American, South Korean and North Korean.

This is a hard measure for President Bush to take. It undoubtedly carries risk. But the risk of continuing inaction in the face of North Korea's race to threaten this country would be greater. Creative diplomacy might have avoided the need to choose between these two unattractive alternatives. Indeed, in earlier years the two of us were directly involved in negotiations with North Korea, coupled with military planning, to prevent just such an outcome. We believe diplomacy might have precluded the current situation. But diplomacy has failed, and we cannot sit by and let this deadly threat mature. A successful Taepodong launch, unopposed by the United States, its intended victim, would only embolden North Korea even further. The result would be more nuclear warheads atop more and more missiles.

Ashton B. Carter was assistant secretary of defense under President Bill Clinton and William J. Perry was secretary of defense. The writers, who conducted the North Korea policy review while in government, are now professors at Harvard and Stanford, respectively.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/21/AR2006062101518.html>

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Washington Post

June 22, 2006

Pg. 23

Former Defense Officials Urge U.S. Strike On North Korean Missile Site

By Glenn Kessler and Anthony Faiola, Washington Post Staff Writers

Former defense secretary William J. Perry has called on President Bush to launch a preemptive strike against the long-range ballistic missile that U.S. intelligence analysts say North Korea is preparing to launch.

In an opinion article that appears in today's Washington Post, Perry and former assistant defense secretary Ashton B. Carter argue that if North Korea continues launch preparations, Bush should immediately declare that the United States will destroy the missile before it can be fired.

Perry and Carter suggest using a cruise missile launched from a submarine and carrying a high-explosive warhead.

"The effect on the Taepodong would be devastating," they write, using the name of the Korean missile. "The multi-story, thin-skinned missile filled with high-energy fuel is itself explosive -- the U.S. airstrike would puncture the missile and probably cause it to explode. The carefully engineered test bed for North Korea's nascent nuclear missile force would be destroyed."

As President Bill Clinton's defense secretary, Perry oversaw preparation for airstrikes on North Korean nuclear facilities in 1994, an attack that was never carried out. He has remained deeply involved in Korean policy issues and is widely respected in national-security circles, especially among senior military officers. He has been a critic of the Bush administration's approach to North Korea.

"We believe diplomacy might have precluded the current situation," Perry and Carter said. "But diplomacy has failed, and we cannot sit by and let this deadly threat mature."

Perry and Carter say that such a strike "undoubtedly carries risk" but that there would be no damage to North Korea beyond the missile galley. They argue that the unproven U.S. missile-defense system might not be able to shoot down a missile.

Meanwhile, there were some signs that South Korea, where officials have expressed skepticism over U.S. intelligence regarding an imminent missile launch, might be willing to step up pressure on the North. Yesterday, Kim Dae Jung, the former South Korean president, postponed a much-lauded visit next week to the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, because of the rising tensions.

"Because of the unforeseen situation, it has become difficult" for Kim to visit North Korea, Jeong Se Hyun, a former top aide to Kim, told reporters.

In addition, South Korea's unification minister, Lee Jong-Seok, was widely quoted in the country's press as suggesting that continued investment and humanitarian aid to North Korea might be curbed if Pyongyang conducts a missile test. In a meeting with opposition leaders from South Korea's Grand National Party, which has criticized the administration of President Roh Moo Hyun for being soft on North Korea, Lee was quoted by the Korea Times as saying Seoul "will not pretend as if nothing has happened in the event of North Korea test-firing a missile."

Also yesterday, the U.S. ambassador to Japan reiterated that "all options are on the table" with regard to North Korea.

Asked whether the United States would attempt to shoot down the North Korean missile if launched, J. Thomas Schieffer warned in an interview that "we have greater technical means of tracking it than we had in the past, and we have options that we have not had in the past."

Faiola reported from Tokyo.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/21/AR2006062101838.html>

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USA Today

June 22, 2006

Pg. 7

N. Korea Offer Of 2-Way Talks Rejected

Bolton: No reward for missile threats

By Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — U.S. Ambassador John Bolton on Wednesday rejected an offer from a North Korean diplomat for direct talks with Pyongyang on a potential missile test. He said the threat of a launch was not the way to seek dialogue.

“You don't normally engage in conversations by threatening to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles,” Bolton said, “and it's not a way to produce a conversation because if you acquiesce in aberrant behavior you simply encourage the repetition of it.

“Obviously the priority remains trying to persuade North Korea not to conduct the launch,” Bolton told reporters in New York.

U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli reiterated the U.S. position that any discussions should be in the framework of six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia. Washington is pressing for North Korea to return to the talks, which are stalled over a U.S. crackdown on the North's alleged illicit financial activity.

“If North Korea wants to talk to the United States about its missile-launch programs or its nuclear program or about security and stability on the peninsula in general, then we should do it through the six-party process,” Ereli said.

Earlier Wednesday, Han Song Ryol, deputy chief of North Korea's mission to the United Nations, said Pyongyang was seeking to resolve the possible missile test concerns through talks. “We are aware of the U.S. concerns about our missile test-launch,” he said. “So our position is that we should resolve the issue through negotiations.”

North Korea shocked the world in 1998 when it fired a missile that flew over northern Japan into the Pacific.

Intelligence reports say the North has fueled a Taepodong-2 missile with a range experts estimate could be up to 9,300 miles — making it capable of reaching large cities on the West Coast of the USA.

After the 1998 missile test, the Security Council issued a press statement — its mildest comment — but Bolton said there would be a stronger council reaction this time.

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060622/a_korea22.art.htm

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New York Times

June 22, 2006

Iran Says Answer On Atom Deal Will Take More Than A Month

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, June 21 — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Wednesday that Iran would take more than a month to give a formal response to an international proposal to resolve the dispute over its uranium enrichment program.

President Bush responded that it seemed "like an awful long time" to wait for an answer.

The proposal offers Iran a package of incentives in exchange for freezing its nuclear activities. When it was put forth early this month by the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and Germany, Western diplomats said Iran would have only weeks to respond.

That position appeared to remain intact on Wednesday. A senior Bush administration official said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was in Vienna with Mr. Bush meeting with allies, had telephoned her European counterparts, including Foreign Minister Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia, to discuss Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments.

"They agreed to stick to the current timeline," the administration official said. "That timeline is still the end of the month."

The official, who asked that his name not be used because he was not authorized to speak publicly on the issue, said that if Iran did not respond within the allotted time, the expectation was that the countries involved would "start moving down the other pathway," of seeking United Nations sanctions.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has previously said he regards the international proposal as a "step forward," but has insisted that Iran has the right to enrich uranium for civilian uses.

"We want equal and fair negotiations with no precondition," the Iranian Students News Agency quoted him as saying. He said Iran would announce its response to the proposal toward the end of August.

"Iranian people stand firmly to defend their rights and will not give in to pressure even an iota," he said later, according to the agency.

At a news conference in Vienna, Mr. Bush expressed some impatience over Mr. Ahmadinejad's remarks. "It shouldn't take the Iranians that long to analyze what is a reasonable deal," he said.

On Monday, President Bush warned Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment program or face the consequences. He said the United States remained willing to join multinational talks with Iran, but only if Iran immediately suspended the enrichment program.

If Iran rejects that offer, he said, "it will result in action before the Security Council, further isolation from the world and progressively stronger political and economic sanctions."

On Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamidreza Assefi, similarly brushed off the idea of a deadline and said Mr. Bush's language was unacceptable.

"Europe, in a correct move and with understanding of Iran's mentality, has not set any deadline in its proposal," he said during a news conference. "Even if there was a deadline in the proposal, the Islamic Republic would not have accepted it."

Iran has not hinted at what its response to the proposal will be, and senior officials have been ambiguous while discussions continue. But a senior official, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said it was unlikely that Iran would accept returning to full suspension of its uranium enrichment activities, with United Nations nuclear agency seals on the centrifuges it uses for the process.

"We already have the capability to enrich uranium," the official said, "and we can hide a small pilot program anywhere underground if they put too much pressure on us."

Iran has said it favors negotiations and wants to seek a peaceful solution to the standoff. But analysts predict that Iran will offer a counterproposal and try to buy more time.

"It seems that Iran will not come out and say that it accepts the proposal anytime soon and will try to kill more time," said Issa Saharkhiz, an Iranian political analyst and reformist politician.

"The nuclear program has created solidarity and unity inside the country," he said. "By sticking to its policy the government thinks it can force the West to offer a better deal and it can appear like the winner inside the country."

Helene Cooper contributed reporting from Washington for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/22/world/middleeast/22iran.html>

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Washington Times

June 23, 2006

Pg. 1

U.S. Set To Down Korean Missile

Bush to decide on launch threat

By Stephen Dinan, The Washington Times

BUDAPEST -- Senior Bush administration officials said publicly for the first time yesterday that the United States is set to shoot down any North Korean missile launch that threatens the United States.

National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley, briefing reporters during President Bush's brief visit here, said the United States has a missile defense system with "limited operational capability" that could be used to try to shoot down an incoming North Korean missile, but he added that U.S. officials were vigorously pursuing a diplomatic push to head off a test launch by Pyongyang.

"The purpose, of course, of that missile defense system is to defend the territory of the United States from attack,"

Mr. Hadley said when asked if the United States would deploy the system should North Korea attack.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told reporters in Washington that Mr. Bush has the power to order a shootdown, using one of 11 ground-based interceptors now located in Alaska and California.

"And the president would make a decision with respect to the nature of the launch, whether it was threatening to the territory of the United States or not, and the likely threat that it would pose," Mr. Rumsfeld told reporters at the Pentagon.

Mr. Rumsfeld said intelligence reports suggest the North Koreans are "making preparations" for the launch of a new version of its Taepodong missile, efforts that have been under way for several days. "There's a lot we know, and a lot we don't know. So, we'll just have to see."

The new missile is thought to have the range to hit U.S. territory, prompting an outcry from the United States and key Asian nations who say such a test would violate a moratorium North Korea has observed since 1998.

In Moscow, Russia's foreign ministry summoned the North Korean ambassador to warn against "undesirable steps" that could increase tensions on the divided Korean Peninsula. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso told the Reuters news agency that Tokyo was prepared to take "harsh measures" if the missile test went forward.

North Korea indicated Wednesday it was ready to put the launch on hold while offering dialogue with the United States. South Korea's Yonhap news agency quoted the North Korean envoy at the United Nations, Han Song-ryol, as

saying: "The United States says it is concerned about our missile test launch. Our position is, 'OK then, let's talk about it.'"

China, the North's principal economic and military ally, appealed to both Pyongyang and Washington for restraint. "We hope that the related parties will resolve this problem through negotiations and dialogue," Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei said in an interview with South Korea's Maeil Business Newspaper.

Vice President Dick Cheney, in an interview with CNN, rejected a suggestion by William Perry, defense secretary under President Clinton, that the United States destroy the North Korean launch site with a pre-emptive cruise missile attack rather than rely on the unproven missile defense shield.

"Obviously, if you're going to launch strikes at another nation, you'd better be prepared to not just fire one shot," Mr. Cheney said, joking that he "appreciated" Mr. Perry's advice. "The fact of the matter is, I think the issue is being addressed appropriately."

State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said Mr. Perry was entitled to his opinions as a private citizen, "but the government position is what our senior officials have publicly stated."

Mr. Hadley stressed repeatedly the United States wants to resolve both the missile test and the Korean nuclear crisis diplomatically. He told reporters the missile defense system existed for research purposes, but that it could be used to try to shoot down a missile in a threatening situation.

The Washington Times reported earlier this week that the Pentagon has put its missile defense system on operational status in response to apparent preparations by the North for a missile test.

The national security adviser said North Korea has the capability to test the missile and said "preparations are very far along" to conduct the test.

In Seoul, South Korean Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung told lawmakers, "It is our judgment that a launch is not imminent."

But he added that U.S. and South Korean forces were prepared to "intercept [a missile] immediately if it was fired toward South Korean territory."

Bill Gertz and David R. Sands in Washington contributed to this story, which is based in part on wire service reports.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20060623-120347-7331r.htm>

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New York Times

June 23, 2006

For Diehards, Search For Iraq's W.M.D. Isn't Over

By Scott Shane

WASHINGTON, June 22 — The United States government abandoned the search for unconventional weapons in Iraq long ago. But Dave Gaubatz has never given up.

Mr. Gaubatz, an earnest, Arabic-speaking investigator who spent the first months of the war as an Air Force civilian in southern Iraq, has said he has identified four sites where residents said chemical weapons were buried in concrete bunkers.

The sites were never searched, he said, and he is not going to let anyone forget it.

"I just don't want the weapons to fall into the wrong hands," Mr. Gaubatz, of Denton, Tex., said.

For the last year, he has given his account on talk radio programs, in Congressional offices and on his Web site, which he introduced last month with, "A lone American battles politicians to locate W.M.D."

Some politicians are outspoken allies in Mr. Gaubatz's cause. He is just one of a vocal and disparate collection of Americans, mostly on the political right, whose search for Saddam Hussein's unconventional weapons continues.

More than a year after the White House, at considerable political cost, accepted the intelligence agencies' verdict that Mr. Hussein destroyed his stockpiles in the 1990's, these Americans have an unshakable faith that the weapons continue to exist.

The proponents include some members of Congress. Two Republicans, Representative Peter Hoekstra of Michigan, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, and Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania held a news conference on Wednesday to announce that, as Mr. Santorum put it, "We have found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq."

American intelligence officials hastily scheduled a background briefing for the news media on Thursday to clarify that. Hoekstra and Mr. Santorum were referring to an Army report that described roughly 500 munitions containing "degraded" mustard or sarin gas, all manufactured before the 1991 gulf war and found scattered through Iraq since 2003.

Such shells had previously been reported and do not change the government conclusion, the officials said.

Such official statements are unlikely to settle the question for the believers, some of whom have impressive credentials. They include a retired Air Force lieutenant general, Thomas G. McInerney, a commentator on the Fox News Channel who has broadcast that weapons are in three places in Syria and one in Lebanon, moved there with Russian help on the eve of the war.

"I firmly believe that, and everything I learn makes my belief firmer," said Mr. McInerney, who retired in 1994. "I'm amazed that the mainstream media hasn't picked this up."

Also among the weapons hunters is Duane R. Clarridge, a long-retired officer of the Central Intelligence Agency who said he thought that the weapons had been moved to Sudan by ship.

"And we think we know which ship," Mr. Clarridge said in a recent interview.

The weapons hunters hold fast to the administration's original justification for the war, as expressed by the president three days before the bombing began in 2003. There was "no doubt," Mr. Bush said in an address to the nation, "that the Iraq regime continues to possess and conceal some of the most lethal weapons ever devised."

The weapons hunters were encouraged in February when tapes of Mr. Hussein's talking with top aides about his arsenal were released at the Intelligence Summit, a private gathering in northern Virginia of 600 former spies, former military officers and hobbyists.

"We reopened the W.M.D. question in a big way," said John Loftus, organizer of the conference.

In March, under Congressional pressure, National Intelligence Director John D. Negroponte began posting on the Web thousands of captured Iraqi documents. Some intelligence officials opposed the move, fearing a free-for-all of amateur speculation and intrigue.

But the weapons hunters were heartened and began combing the documents for clues.

Mr. Gaubatz, 47, now chief investigator for the Dallas County medical examiner, said he knew some people might call him a kook.

"I don't care about being embarrassed," he said, spreading snapshots, maps and notebooks documenting his findings across the dining room table in an interview at his house. "I only brought this up when the White House said the hunt for W.M.D. was over."

Last week, Mr. Gaubatz achieved a victory. He presented his case to officers from the Defense Intelligence Agency in Dallas. The meeting was scheduled after the intervention of Mr. Hoekstra and Representative Curt Weldon of Pennsylvania, second-ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Weldon spoke with Mr. Gaubatz last month in a lengthy conference call.

Mr. Hoekstra "has said on many occasions that we need to know what happened to Saddam's W.M.D.," his spokesman, Jamal Ware, said. Mr. Hoekstra "is determined to make sure that we get the postwar intelligence right," Mr. Ware added.

The authoritative postwar weapons intelligence was gathered by the Iraq Survey Group, whose 1,200 members spent more than a year searching suspected chemical, biological and nuclear sites and interviewing Iraqis.

The final report of the group, by Charles A. Duelfer, special adviser on Iraqi weapons to the C.I.A., concluded that any stockpiles had been destroyed long before the war and that transfers to Syria were "unlikely."

"We did not visit every inch of Iraq," Mr. Duelfer said in an interview. "That would have been impossible. We did not check every rumor that came along."

But he said important officials in Mr. Hussein's government, with every incentive to win favor with the Americans by exposing stockpiles, convinced him that the weapons were gone.

Mr. Duelfer said he remained open to new evidence.

"I've seen lots of good-hearted people who thought they saw something," he said. "But none of the reports have panned out."

The hunt clearly appeals to the sleuth in Mr. Gaubatz, who was in the Air Force for 23 years, much of it investigating murder, drug and other criminal cases for the Office of Special Investigations. He retired in 1999 and worked as an investigator for Target, the retail chain, but soon returned to the investigations agency as a civilian. After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Mr. Gaubatz spent a year learning Arabic and in February 2003 was sent to Saudi Arabia and then Iraq after the war began.

Stationed near Nasiriya, he and a colleague headed out in a utility vehicle at 6 a.m. and spent their days talking with anyone they saw — Bedouin tribesmen, farmers, hospital workers, former military officers, police officers and city bureaucrats.

Eventually, by his account, Iraqis led him to four places where they said they thought that chemical weapons were hidden in underground bunkers or, in one case, under the Euphrates River.

"We were very excited," he recalled. "We could hardly wait to get back and do our reports."

An official of the investigating agency who was granted anonymity to discuss a former employee said Mr. Gaubatz was known as "a gung-ho, good agent."

When the sites identified to him were not searched, he said, he called the 75th Exploitation Task Force every other day, and later the Iraq Survey Group, pleading with whoever answered to send a team with heavy digging equipment.

He recalled: "They'd say, 'We're in a combat zone. We don't have the people or the equipment.' "

His informants grew angry. "They said, 'We risked our lives and our families to help you, and nothing's happened,' " Mr. Gaubatz recounted.

He was disillusioned.

"I didn't imagine it would be a battle to get them to search," he said. "One of the primary reasons for going into combat was the W.M.D."

Mr. Gaubatz came home in mid-July 2003, and settled in with his wife, Lorrie, a teacher, and their daughter, Miranda, 7. He continued to lobby for searches, but his Iraqi informers and Air Force colleagues have told him that there were no searches, he said.

At his two meetings last week with officers of the Defense Intelligence Agency — meetings that the agency confirms occurred but will not otherwise discuss — he reviewed satellite photographs of the supposed weapons sites with the officers.

"They're very interested," he said.

Yet, he added, "I'm still afraid they might not follow through."

He has revised his Web site to put the nation on notice. "My Web site will remain open," he wrote, "until the sites are searched."

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/23/us/23believers.html?_r=1&oref=slogin

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Arizona Daily Star (Tucson)

June 23, 2006

Latest U.S. Missile-Defense Test A Success

By Associated Press

HONOLULU — A Navy ship on Thursday intercepted a medium-range missile warhead above the Earth's atmosphere off Hawaii in the latest test of the U.S. missile-defense program, the military said.

The Missile Defense Agency said the test had been scheduled for months and was not prompted by indications that North Korea was planning to test-launch a long-range missile.

The USS Shiloh detected a medium-range missile after it was launched from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai, then fired a Standard Missile-3 interceptor.

The interceptor shot down the target warhead after it separated from its rocket booster, more than 100 miles above the Pacific Ocean and 250 miles northwest of Kauai, the agency said in a statement.

The test marked the seventh time in eight attempts the military has successfully shot down a missile target with an interceptor fired from a ship.

It also was the second successful attempt by a ship to shoot down a separating target. Medium- and long-range ballistic missiles typically have at least two stages, increasing the challenge for interceptors, which must distinguish between the body of the missile and the warhead.

The military had initially scheduled the test for Wednesday but postponed the drill after a small watercraft ventured into a zone that had been blocked off for the event.

In a first, a Japanese ship took part in the missile test. The Kirishima, a cruiser, practiced tracking the target.

Japan agreed to jointly develop missile-defense technology with the U.S. late last year, broadening an earlier bilateral research pact. Tokyo became interested in acquiring and developing missile-defense technology after the last North Korean ballistic-missile-defense test, in 1998.

<http://www.azstarnet.com/news/134900>

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Washington Post

June 23, 2006

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U.S. Rejects Suggestion To Strike N. Korea Before It Fires Missile

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Senior Bush administration officials tried to ease tensions yesterday over a possible North Korean missile launch, playing down the idea of using the nascent missile defense system and brushing aside a provocative proposal to launch a preemptive strike against the missile site.

The officials, including Vice President Cheney and national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley, said they were pressing diplomatic options to persuade North Korea not to launch a long-range missile for the first time since 1998. "We think diplomacy is the right answer, and that is what we are pursuing," Hadley told reporters who were with President Bush in Budapest.

Writing in The Washington Post yesterday, former defense secretary William J. Perry and former assistant secretary of defense Ashton B. Carter contended that diplomacy has failed and that Bush should launch a preemptive strike against the facility on the northeastern coast of North Korea, where Pyongyang may be preparing a missile for a test launch.

"I appreciate Bill's advice," Cheney said in an interview with CNN. "I think, obviously, if you're going to launch strikes at another nation, you'd better be prepared to not just fire one shot. And, the fact of the matter is, I think the issue is being addressed appropriately."

Cheney minimized the threat posed by North Korea to the United States, saying that its "missile capabilities are fairly rudimentary" and that "their test flights in the past haven't been notably successful."

U.S. analysts say that they believe North Korea is preparing to launch a missile but that the satellite evidence is not conclusive. U.S. officials say that spy satellites have observed the stacking of a missile and propellant loading trucks near the site, but that there is no confirmation that the missile has been fueled. South Korea's defense minister said yesterday that Seoul believes a launch is not imminent.

Hadley suggested it would be a stretch to suggest that the U.S. missile defense system could intercept and destroy a North Korean missile. "It is a research, development and testing capability that has some limited operational capability," he said.

The U.S. officials spoke after Russia and China, two key North Korean allies, publicly expressed concern about a possible launch, adding weight to the alarm expressed earlier in the week by Japan and South Korea.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/22/AR2006062200582.html>

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Los Angeles Times

June 23, 2006

Russia Voices Alarm To N. Korea

China also expresses its concern about a possible missile launch by the Pyongyang regime. But Seoul attempts to play down the tension.

By Associated Press

SEOUL — Russia summoned North Korea's ambassador Thursday to express alarm that the regime in Pyongyang might launch a long-range missile, and the isolated nation's other major ally, China, issued its strongest statement of concern to date over the standoff.

South Korea played down the growing tensions, even as the U.S. national security advisor said launch preparations were "very far along."

"It is our judgment that a launch is not imminent," Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung said.

In an unusual step, Russia's Foreign Ministry called in North Korean Ambassador Pak Ui Chun to say it was alarmed by reports of the planned launch and warn him of Moscow's opposition to any steps that would destabilize the region.

"In particular, the undesirability was stressed of any actions that could negatively affect regional stability and complicate the search for a settlement to the Korean peninsula's nuclear problem," a statement by the ministry said.

At a briefing in Beijing, Jiang Yu, a Chinese Foreign Ministry official, said: "We are very concerned about the current situation.... We hope all parties can do more in the interest of regional peace and stability."

Concern about a possible North Korean launch has grown since activity was reported at the country's launch site on its east coast, where U.S. officials say a Taepodong 2 missile — believed capable of reaching the U.S. territory of Guam and perhaps Alaska or Hawaii — is possibly being fueled.

Japan and the United States have issued strong statements of concern and have sent ships and planes to monitor the situation.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missile23jun23,1,2257284.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Is Iran Studying North Korea's Nuclear Moves?

By Howard LaFranchi, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

WASHINGTON--There may be no such thing as a North Korea playbook for would-be nuclear proliferators. But many Western leaders suspect Iran of trying to emulate North Korea's secretive development of nuclear weapons. And as both nations continue to command international attention for their nuclear programs, it's clear the two countries watch each other for "how to" lessons in nuclear diplomacy.

This week, each of these nations has demonstrated its ability to command attention. North Korea said it might disregard past commitments and test-launch a new intercontinental missile, and Iran set a timetable of mid-August for replying to the US and other countries about their package of incentives - later than the US wants.

For each of the besieged regimes, experts say, an underlying goal is to establish a level of international respect, especially in relations with Washington. To help achieve this, these experts say, the powers of Tehran are no doubt studying the more experienced Kim Jong Il for dos and don'ts, and vice versa.

"Not only do they watch each other, but they may indeed compare notes," says Jonathan Pollack, a North Korea expert at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I. Noting that North Korea has supplied Iran with missiles and other technology, he adds, "The North Koreans do have certain on again, off again relations with Iran, so they may do more than just study each other's experiences."

In recent months, North Korea had retreated from the world stage as the spotlight shifted to Iran and international efforts to end its uranium-enrichment program. That changed this week when Pyongyang - miffed by the lack of attention, many analysts say - hinted through diplomatic channels that it might be preparing to test-launch a new intercontinental missile.

The United States had been eyeing North Korea's moves. Earlier this month, it said that satellite photos and other evidence suggested Pyongyang was preparing the test launch. The long-range missile is particularly disconcerting to the US and other countries because a successful one could reach well beyond North Korea's immediate neighborhood - potentially to Hawaii or Alaska.

If nothing else, North Korea's actions got it back to where many analysts say it wants to be - the focus of international attention. At a US-European Union summit in Austria this week, President Bush and European leaders concentrated on North Korea, as well as Iran: They called on Pyongyang not to carry out any destabilizing missile test, while pressing Tehran to respond soon to a package of enticements to suspend its enrichment program.

"Iran has been getting a lot of attention lately, and this may have provoked the North Koreans to take some action, because they don't like to be ignored," says Robert Einhorn, a former assistant secretary of State for nonproliferation, now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. "They may see this [test launch] as a way to put themselves back on the international agenda."

Of course, North Korea's rumblings about a prospective missile launch may be about more than a desire to rival Iran for attention, Mr. Einhorn says. For one thing, he notes that Pyongyang has not carried out a missile test since the late 1990s, so the regime may be under internal pressures to advance its technology.

"You can only do so much testing on the ground, so I'm sure there are military pressures in North Korea to prove the design of this missile," he says. Besides that, he adds, "You enhance your deterrence by demonstrating your capability."

Pyongyang may also be trying to enhance its leverage with the US and others in stalled six-party talks on its nuclear program. For example, Einhorn says, the North Koreans may think they've found a way, with the threat of a missile launch, to press the US into dropping punitive measures it has successfully imposed on the North's financial operations.

While Einhorn says there is no direct evidence of any kind of learning relationship between Pyongyang and Tehran, he does believe it stands to reason that the two would watch each other.

"I wouldn't be surprised if [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad and other hard-liners in the regime say, 'Why do we back down at the last minute, when you look at the North Koreans and see that they make a threat and carry through - and on the whole that has not been a losing approach for them?' "

Others say that Tehran may indeed be following the Pyongyang playbook - but just as much to see what not to do.

"It's hard to believe the Iranians would put themselves in the same category as the North Koreans. There are so many differences between them," says Paul Kerr, a nonproliferation expert at the Arms Control Association in Washington.

Iranian officials, including national security adviser Hassan Rohani, have indicated in speeches given in recent years that Tehran has studied the cases of North Korea, Iraq, and Libya. "The suggestion is they have opted for some kind of middle ground," says Mr. Kerr.

Above all, Tehran has a much higher level of diplomatic and economic exchange with the world, he says, and would not aspire to Pyongyang's isolation. And North Korea has nothing like the sea of oil that Iran sits atop. But what Tehran and Pyongyang certainly have in common, Kerr says, is a preoccupation with the idea that what the US really wants is regime change. And with both countries remaining fixations of the Bush administration, it is likely that the two watch each other for pointers on successfully maneuvering with the US. Indeed, the US, by turning North Korea's missile-launch preparations into a major international confrontation, may be giving both countries an unintended lesson in how to provoke the US, says Mr. Pollack of the Naval War College.

"What North Korea is up to is not as obscure as people make it out to be, if you realize that what they want most of all is a response from us," he says.

Pollack says the test-launch controversy - which elicited more immediate response from Mr. Bush and other top administration officials than some North Korean actions - reflects the "tool kit" that Pyongyang employs to try to reach its real objective, which is direct talks with the US.

Given Tehran's interest in the same objective, he says Iran is certainly watching Pyongyang's success or failure as it weighs its own response to international entreaties on its nuclear program - which include the promise of talks with the US.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0623/p01s01-usfp.html>

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Washington Times

June 23, 2006

Pg. 15

Cheney Pushes Nuclear Initiative

Congress divided on assistance

By Katie Stuhldreher, The Washington Times

Vice President Dick Cheney urged Congress yesterday to "update Cold War policies" by supporting the U.S.-India Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Initiative, saying delays in its passage would jeopardize a key strategic relationship. Mr. Cheney, speaking to the U.S.-India Business Council after it awarded him a distinguished service award, said the U.S. economy and national security would benefit from the legislation, which would allow the United States to share civilian nuclear technology with India.

Congress remains divided over the issue and Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, told the Financial Times last week that he did not think the matter would be decided by the end of this year.

Mr. Cheney said delay and unnecessary amendments could ruin the deal. He called on members of Congress who support the initiative to help expedite legislation, specifically naming Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York Democrat; Sen. John Cornyn, Texas Republican; and Rep. Gary L. Ackerman, New York Democrat.

"This is one of the most strategic foreign policy initiatives of this administration," he said.

Critics of the deal say it would weaken the U.S. position in nuclear negotiations with Iran and North Korea.

Mr. Cheney said, however, that India had an exemplary nuclear track record and that the deal would reinforce nonproliferation efforts.

"This would allow India to enter the [nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] mainstream and conform to global standards," he said.

In response to another raised fear, Mr. Cheney said, "There is concern in America about the outsourcing of jobs to India. Congress should address this by focusing on job training and education, to ensure that Americans can fill high-level jobs."

Mr. Cheney also said nuclear energy deals could reduce international competition for limited oil resources and improve the environment because nuclear energy is cleaner than that generated by coal and oil.

The legislation, due for a markup in the House and Senate next week, requires Congress to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1978, which prohibits the United States from sharing civilian nuclear technology with nations that have nuclear weapons programs that are not subject to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

India tested its first nuclear bomb in 1974. The country is not a signatory of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Under legislation introduced in March, an exemption for India would depend upon several conditions: India would have to present a plan to segregate its civilian and military nuclear facilities, negotiate a treaty limiting the production of fissile material, adopt IAEA safeguards, and work to prevent the spread of technology that could assist other states in developing weapons.

Additionally, the 45 nations of the Nuclear Suppliers Group would have to reach a consensus to endorse the deal. In March, many NSG members told Reuters news agency that they would support the initiative so long as the IAEA can assure them that India's military and civilian programs are separate.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20060622-095438-3856r.htm>

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