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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Ga. creates network to fight agro-terrorism

The Associated Press Published on: 03/07/05

TIFTON — Georgia launched an agro-terrorism awareness program today to create statewide network of emergency workers, farmers, veterinarians and others who would help protect the food supply from sabotage.

Lee Myers, the state veterinarian and chair of the Georgia's agro-terrorism committee, says the state is the first in the nation to develop an agro-security awareness program.

The program is asking those who work with the food supply to be vigilant for anything unusual. For example, veterinarians would be on the lookout for unexpected symptoms in animals and farmers would report any signs of unusual plant sicknesses.

Georgia's program could become a model for other states.

Agro-terrorism is defined as the intentional use of chemical, biological, radiological agents or explosives to destroy crops and livestock or to disrupt food distribution.

County agricultural agents from throughout the state are the first to receive the training today and tomorrow at the University of Georgia's Rural Development Center in Tifton.

The county agents will return to their communities and train emergency workers, agricultural leaders and others who might need to respond to an agricultural emergency, whether natural or manmade. http://www.ajc.com/metro/content/metro/0305/07agroterrorism.html

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New York Times March 9, 2005 Pg. 1

Data Is Lacking On Iran's Arms, U.S. Panel Says

By Douglas Jehl and Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, March 8 - A commission due to report to President Bush this month will describe American intelligence on Iran as inadequate to allow firm judgments about Iran's weapons programs, according to people who have been briefed on the panel's work.

The report comes as intelligence agencies prepare a new formal assessment on Iran, and follows a 14-month review by the panel, which Mr. Bush ordered last year to assess the quality of overall intelligence about the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

The Bush administration has been issuing increasingly sharp warnings about what it says are Iran's efforts to build nuclear weapons. The warnings have been met with firm denials in Tehran, which says its nuclear program is intended purely for civilian purposes.

The most complete recent statement by American agencies about Iran and its weapons, in an unclassified report sent to Congress in November by Porter J. Goss, director of central intelligence, said Iran continued "to vigorously pursue indigenous programs to produce nuclear, chemical and biological weapons."

The International Atomic Energy Agency, which has been conducting inspections in Iran for two years, has said it has not found evidence of any weapons program. But the agency has also expressed skepticism about Iran's insistence that its nuclear activities are strictly civilian.

The nine-member bipartisan presidential panel, led by Laurence Silberman, a retired federal judge, and Charles S. Robb, a former governor and senator from Virginia, had unrestricted access to the most senior people and the most sensitive documents of the intelligence agencies.

In its report, the panel is also expected to be sharply critical of American intelligence on North Korea. But in interviews, people who have been briefed on the commission's deliberations and conclusions said they regarded the record on Iran as particularly worrisome.

One person who described the panel's deliberations and conclusions characterized American intelligence on Iran as "scandalous," given the importance and relative openness of the country, compared with such an extreme case as North Korea.

That person and others who have been briefed on the panel's work would not be more specific in describing the inadequacies. But former government officials who are experts on Iran say that while American intelligence agencies have devoted enormous resources to Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979, they have had little success in the kinds of human spying necessary to understand Iranian decision-making.

Among the major setbacks, former intelligence officials have said, was the successful penetration in the late 1980's by Iranian authorities of the principal American spy network inside the country, which was being run from a C.I.A. station in Frankfurt. The arrests of reported American spies was known at the time, but the impact on American intelligence reverberated as late as the mid-1990's.

A spokesman for the commission, Carl Kropf, declined to comment about any conclusions reached. The last National Intelligence Estimate on Iran was completed in 2001 and is now being reassessed, according to American intelligence officials. As a first step, the National Intelligence Council, which produces the estimates and reports to Mr. Goss, is expected this spring to circulate a classified update that will focus on Iran and its weapons. In Congress, the Senate Intelligence Committee has recently begun its own review into the quality of intelligence on Iran, in what the Republican and Democratic leaders of the panel have described as an effort to pre-empt any repeat of the experience in Iraq, where prewar American assertions about illicit weapons proved to be mistaken. But Congressional officials say the language of some recent intelligence reports on Iran has included more caveats and qualifications than in the past, in what they described as the agencies' own response to the Iraq experience. In testimony last month, intelligence officials from several agencies told Congress that they were convinced that Tehran wanted nuclear weapons, but also said the uncertainty played to Iran's advantage.

"The Iranians don't necessarily have to have a successful nuclear program in order to have the deterrent value," said Carol A. Rodley, the State Department's second-ranking top intelligence official. "They merely have to convince us, others and their neighbors that they do."

The commission's findings will also include recommendations for further structural changes among intelligence agencies, to build on the legislation Mr. Bush signed in December that sets up a new director of national intelligence. Among the proposals discussed but apparently rejected was the idea of consolidating the National Security Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency into a single Defense Department operation that would integrate what are now divided responsibilities for satellite reconnaissance and eavesdropping operations.

The panel is to send a classified report to Mr. Bush by March 31. The panel is expected to issue an unclassified version at about the same time, but it is not clear whether the criticism of intelligence on Iran will be included in that public document, the people familiar with the panel's deliberations said.

In a television interview in February on Fox News, Vice President Dick Cheney described the work of the commission as "one of the most important things that's going forward today."

In the case of Iraq, a National Intelligence Estimate completed in October 2002 was among the assessments that expressed certainty that Baghdad possessed chemical and biological weapons and was rebuilding its nuclear program. Those assessments were wrong, and a report last year by the chief American weapons inspector found that Iraq had destroyed what remained of its illicit arsenal nearly a decade before the United States invasion. A report last summer by the Senate committee concluded that the certainty of prewar assessments on Iraq had not been supported by the intelligence available at the time. At the Central Intelligence Agency, senior officials have defended the assessments, but they have also imposed new guidelines intended to reduce the prospect for failures. Among those guidelines, an intelligence official said Tuesday, is a requirement that in producing future National Intelligence Estimates, the National Intelligence Council state more explicitly how much confidence it places on each judgment it makes. Those guidelines are being enforced in the updates on the Iranian nuclear program and in the revised National Intelligence Estimate on Iran, which will address issues like political stability as well. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/09/international/09weapons.html?hp&ex=1110430800&en=48649e4ca2d8893d&en=486

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Omaha World-Herald March 5, 2005

ei=5094&partner=homepage

Stratcom Chief Says Defense Requires A Global Approach

By Henry J. Cordes, World-Herald Staff Writer

The commander of the U.S. Strategic Command says what keeps him awake at night is the very real threat of an attack on the United States with weapons of mass destruction.

"Almost anyone can build a weapon of mass destruction, and if you can build it, you can get it into the United States," Marine Gen. James E. Cartwright said Friday. "We ought to be losing sleep over that."

That is why it is important for the United States to take a global approach to combating weapons of mass destruction, one of the reasons that mission was assigned to Stratcom earlier this year, Cartwright said. Cartwright spoke about the new mission and national security during a "State of Stratcom" briefing Friday before the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, a rare public appearance for the head of the key defense command based at Offutt Air Force Base.

With the increasing globalization of the world's economy, events around the globe can have a real impact on Americans' daily lives, Cartwright said.

"The business of America is doing business, and we do it on a global scale," he said.

That is why the U.S. military has been forced to increasingly take a global approach to the nation's security, Cartwright said.

As the armed forces have reorganized to face the threats, Stratcom has gained many new responsibilities, including global intelligence, space operations, defending computer networks and now combating weapons of mass destruction - which Cartwright called "a potential we really have to face."

The answer isn't closing the U.S. borders and going into isolation. "Then they win," he said of terrorists. Cartwright did not go into detail on the kinds of things Stratcom would be doing to combat the threat. But he said the United States needs to make it clear that if anyone is contemplating such an attack, "we're going to spend all our waking hours hunting you down."

While clearly it doesn't take a missile to deliver a weapon of mass destruction, Cartwright said, it would be irresponsible for the United States not to develop capabilities to defend against that kind of attack. While the controversial effort to develop a U.S. missile shield has had it's problems, he predicted the technology ultimately will succeed.

http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u pg=54&u sid=1352134

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Homeland Security: Much Is Being Done to Protect Agriculture from a Terrorist Attack, but Important Challenges Remain.

GAO-05-214, March 8.

http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-214 Highlights - http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d05214high.pdf

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Washington Times March 10, 2005 Pg. 5

Pentagon Sees Missile-Defense Progress

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

U.S. defenses against enemy missiles are progressing toward full deployment and a new sea-based version hit a simulated Scud missile flight during a test last month, Pentagon officials said yesterday.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Trey Obering, director of the Pentagon's Missile Defense Agency, told reporters that the basic system of interceptor missiles, sensors and tracking devices is working and is a critical national security weapon.

"Overall I'm very optimistic," Gen. Obering said during a telephone conference. "This is a critical capability and I think that people will realize over time that we absolutely need this for our security, and I think we'll look back and say thank goodness that we were able to develop this system when we did and get it into the field."

Eight long-range missile interceptors currently are deployed in Alaska and California as both a test system and emergency missile shield against a very limited long-range missile attack.

Gen. Obering declined to comment on North Korea's recent announcement that it is ending its self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile tests.

Rear Adm. Kathleen Paige, a second Missile Defense Agency official, said the Navy's Aegis ballistic missile defense weapon hit a simulated Scud missile in flight over the Pacific last month. The Feb. 24 launch of Standard Missile-3 near Hawaii scored a direct hit in a wartime-conditions exercise.

"This was a very important test because it was the first time we had ever used an operational version of the Aegis ballistic missile defense weapon system," Adm. Paige said.

The test involved a realistic "war at sea" scenario and concluded with the Navy cruiser USS Lake Erie firing the first SM-3 at a 310-mile-range target missile.

The Navy currently has four additional SM-3s that could be deployed in a conflict. The full system of 18 SM-3-armed ships will be deployed beginning in 2007. An additional six Aegis-equipped warships are currently deployed in Asia to monitor North Korean missile launches as part of the missile defense system.

The SM-3 missile slammed into the nose of the Scud target missile 80 miles in altitude and about three minutes after launch, and about 80 seconds after the Erie's radar system detected it, Adm. Paige said.

Gen. Obering said two recent ground-based interceptor test failures were disappointing, the result of minor "glitches" that are being fixed.

Last month, a ground-based test interceptor failed to launch after a connecting arm on the silo failed to retract. An earlier test of the long-range interceptor failed due to a software problem.

"We have confidence in the basic functionality of the system," he said. "We've got some things to correct in our test program, but they are not major deficiencies in the system."

The current ground-based missile defense can be converted from a test system to an emergency operational missile defense in "minutes," he said.

http://www.washtimes.com/national/20050309-112253-8284r.htm

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Washington Post March 10, 2005 Pg. 19

Missile Defense Director Moves To End Test Glitches

Equipment Review Ordered; Admiral to Oversee Preparations

By Bradley Graham, Washington Post Staff Writer

The general in charge of the Pentagon's faltering effort to develop a system for defending the United States against ballistic missile attack said yesterday that he has ordered a thorough review of all ground equipment used in testing and appointed a senior Navy officer to oversee future test preparations.

The moves by Air Force Lt. Gen. Henry A. "Trey" Obering III follow failed attempts in December and February to launch interceptor rockets in tests of the fledgling system. Both failures have been blamed on what defense officials say were minor glitches -- a flawed software code in December and a faulty silo retracting arm in February.

In a conference call with reporters, Obering expressed continued confidence in the system. He said that even without the launch of the rockets, the recent tests scored some successes by demonstrating the system's ability to track target missiles and generate intercept instructions. But he acknowledged frustration at the tendency of simple glitches to foil the tests.

"The hard things about missile defense we are accomplishing," Obering said. "The easy things are what we're having trouble with."

The testing setbacks have proven especially disappointing for the Pentagon, which has been hoping to get into a rhythm of regular flight trials after a two-year hiatus in such experiments. The new tests are particularly important because they are the first attempted flights of the system's interceptor missile, which is designed to fly into space and release a "kill vehicle" that would steer into enemy warheads. Previous flight tests relied on a slower, less advanced interceptor.

The tests are part of an effort to construct a scaled-down version of the "Star Wars" network envisioned by President Ronald Reagan two decades ago. While Reagan imagined a shield against a massive Soviet attack, President Bush has pursued a more limited system aimed at thwarting a small number of ballistic missiles that might be fired at the United States not by a major power such as Russia or China but by a smaller adversary such as North Korea or Iran. But Bush has pushed to make the system operational before it has been subjected to realistic testing, prompting complaints from congressional Democrats and many scientists that the program remains largely unproven. The Pentagon has conducted 10 flight tests since 1999, scoring five hits but under conditions markedly different from what would occur in actual attacks.

Obering said he hopes to run another intercept test by the end of April. But investigators have yet to determine the root cause of last month's failure of the retracting arm -- one of three arms that were in the silo, the general said. He said the review of all ground-testing equipment that he has ordered is patterned after an intense study of the history of all interceptor components conducted last year. He has also asked a team of independent experts to look "at our complete test process on the ground" for signs of weakness, he said. And he has created a new post -- director of mission readiness -- for managing future test preparations.

The new post will be filled by Rear Adm. Kathleen Paige, who has led a parallel Pentagon effort to develop a ship-based system for intercepting short- and medium-range ballistic missiles. That program has scored successful intercepts in five out of six tries. Obering said he hopes Paige will bring "some of the expertise and procedures from the sea-based program" into the land-based one.

"We've got some things to correct in our test program, but they are not major deficiencies in the system," said the general, who serves as director of the Missile Defense Agency. "These are things that we should not be plagued with; we should not be having these types of glitches.

"They're not going to generate major modifications," he added. "I will take some steps to make sure that we have solved those minor problems that keep tripping us up. But, overall, I'm very optimistic."

The Bush administration had planned to place the land-based system on alert by last October. But even with the first interceptors installed several months ago, the system has remained in what Pentagon officials continue to refer to as a "shakedown" phase.

Obering said adjustments in the system have led to a substantial drop in the time required to switch it from a test mode to an operational one for intercepting enemy missiles.

"It was taking us hours to make the transition," he said. "We've worked that down to minutes."

Eventually, he added, the plan is to be able to achieve the transition in no time at all -- like the flick of a switch. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21817-2005Mar9.html

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Salt Lake Tribune March 10, 2005

Depot Zaps Millionth Munition

Chemical weapons: The facility edges closer to eliminating its stock of blister and nerve agents

By Thomas Burr, The Salt Lake Tribune

DESERET CHEMICAL DEPOT - The nation's largest chemical weapon storage facility destroyed its millionth munition on Wednesday, edging closer to eliminating its aging stockpile of nerve and blister agents.

Deserte Chemical Depot, a U.S. Army facility in Tooele County that at one time held nearly half the United States' original stockpile of chemical weapons, plans to be rid of all munitions by 2008. That is four years before the nation must eliminate its entire inventory under an international treaty meant to eradicate such weapons.

U.S. Army Gen. Benjamin Griffin, who oversees the Army's Materiel Command, heralded the milestone, calling it a historic occasion.

"Nothing is more critical to our military and to our nation than what you are doing here," Griffin told hundreds of employees who gathered to celebrate the accomplishment.

Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., who signed a proclamation commemorating the occasion, said Utah was participating in a role critical to national security.

"This is a milestone of which all of you should be proud," he said, noting that the depot's mission is for the "safe storage, surveillance and destruction" of the stockpile. "To that end, you have succeeded."

The million mark also moves Utah closer to reducing any and all risk for a leak of nerve agent outside the depot's boundaries, an incident Army officials say hasn't happened since the facility started destroying the weapons in 1996. One depot worker was exposed to a nerve agent, but is now back to work without any apparent long-term damage. Col. Raymond Van Pelt, the depot's commanding officer, said all nerve agents will be destroyed at the facility by next year, with most destroyed by this June, leaving only mustard blister agents to be incinerated after that. That's a stark change from the original tally of nearly 1.2 million munitions, or 13,617 tons of chemical weapons,

held at the site before the destruction program began. Weapons have been stored at the depot since the early 1940s and

at the site before the destruction program began. Weapons have been stored at the depot since the early 1940s and some of the still existing munitions date to World War II.

The depot, 45 miles southwest of Salt Lake City, stores the aging weapons in "igloo" bunkers. The weapons are destroyed in a complicated process that includes heating the drained chemical agent to more than 2,700 degrees Fahrenheit, even though Army officials say the agent is destroyed at 700 degrees.

Army officials dismissed concern Wednesday that with the reduction in Utah's inventory of weapons, more chemical weapons could be shipped to the state for incineration. The Defense Department has been studying a proposal to move weapons from Colorado to Utah.

"As it stands now, there are no plans," said depot spokeswoman Alaine Southworth.

While officials trumpeted Wednesday's occasion, environmental activists cautioned there is much work to be done. "Well, congratulations," said Steve Erickson, director of the Salt Lake City-based Citizens Education Project. "Let's get rid of the rest of it. The sooner we can get rid of it, the better it will be for all of us."

Since it stores more of the nation's chemical weapons than the eight other incinerator sites, Utah's 63-year-old depot will be the only disposal facility to reach the million-weapon milestone. http://www.sltrib.com/ci_2603180

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Financial Times (FT.com)

Nuclear arms to lead Rice's Asian tour

By Guy Dinmore in Washington

Published: March 9 2005 20:43 | Last updated: March 9 2005 20:43

Nuclear proliferation and the war on terror are expected to top the agenda for Condoleezza Rice when she visits six Asian nations next week on her first tour of the region as US secretary of state.

The state department announced on Tuesday that Ms Rice would visit India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Japan, Korea, and China from March 14-21. Her visit comes at a sensitive juncture in efforts to persuade North Korea to rejoin sixparty talks on dismantling its nuclear programme. Senior US officials recently voiced frustration that China, the host and mediator, has not put more pressure on North Korea.

Pyongyang has refused to rejoin the negotiations that last took place nine months ago. Ms Rice would review diplomatic efforts to convene the next round, the state department said.

Ning Fukui, China's special envoy to the negotiations, is due to meet Chris Hill, the head of the US delegation, and other US officials in Washington today.

While the US officials emphasise what they see as the overall positive trend in Sino-US relations, there is serious concern about China's military build-up and an anti-secession law, directed at Taiwan, that is currently passing through the National People's Congress.

The Bush administration says it is pleased with Pakistan's collection of information on North Korea's and Iran's nuclear programmes through the revelations of Abdul Qadeer Khan, the rogue Pakistani scientist, who ran a network of nuclear smugglers. Pakistan's help in the "war on terror" is also touted by the Bush administration for justifying its sizeable financial assistance to President Pervez Musharraf.

US efforts to isolate Iran are likely to run into stronger opposition, however. China, India and Japan are competing for access to energy sources in the Middle East and oppose sanctions against Iran. http://news.ft.com/cms/s/2d179256-90da-11d9-9980-0000e2511c8.html

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New York Times March 11, 2005

Pakistan Admits Scientist Sold Centrifuges To Iran's Atom Program

By Somini Sengupta

NEW DELHI, March 10 - A Pakistani official said Thursday that his country's disgraced nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadeer Khan, had given centrifuges to Iran, but not with the government's consent.

It was Pakistan's first specific public declaration of the nuclear technology that had been sold to Iran, though it stopped short of saying what else had been supplied by Dr. Khan's black-market network. The official, Information Minister Sheik Rashid Ahmed, did not discuss sales to other nations and he reiterated Pakistan's refusal to let foreign investigators interview Dr. Khan.

"This was an individual act, nothing to do with the government of Pakistan," Mr. Ahmed said in a telephone interview Thursday evening. Other Pakistani officials also have insisted that Dr. Khan worked without help from government officials, despite the fact that some of his equipment was transported on Pakistani military aircraft. Mr. Ahmed first made his remarks at a news conference in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, earlier in the day, according to news agency reports.

Senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence services have expressed frustration that they have not been able to question Dr. Khan directly, and they have said they are suspicious about some of the answers that get passed back to them from Pakistani officials.

Mr. Ahmed said, "We have investigated him and we have no intention of giving up to anybody."

Centrifuges can enrich uranium, turning it into fuel for nuclear power plants or, with considerable enrichment, for weapons. Iran has maintained that it wants enriched uranium only to generate electric power. The Bush administration contends that Iran's true intent is to build a bomb, although the International Atomic Energy Agency has said it has not found proof of an Iranian weapons project. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is scheduled to visit India and Pakistan next week.

Dr. Khan, esteemed in Pakistan as the moving force behind the country's nuclear weapons capability to counter that of India's admitted last year to having spread Pakistan's nuclear technology. But he offered no details, and issued an apology.

He was immediately pardoned by President Pervez Musharraf and now lives in a closely guarded house in the capital. Bush administration officials have said they believe that most of Dr. Khan's black-market network has been dismantled.

Pakistan, an important ally in the United States' campaign against terrorism, has in the past acknowledged that Dr. Khan smuggled nuclear secrets to Iran and Libya. But it has never offered any details of those deals or admitted that Dr. Khan shipped weapons technology to North Korea, despite considerable evidence of visits and trade between the Khan network and North Korea.

A blueprint for a 10-kiloton atomic bomb emerged last year in the files of the Libyan weapons program, apparently sold or given to Libya when it bought equipment from the Khan network. Asked whether Dr. Khan had sold bomb-making secrets to Iran or any other country, Mr. Ahmed said Thursday that he had "no information" about such transactions.

He said Pakistan had cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear watchdog agency. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/11/international/asia/11pakistan.html?

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