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USA Today
July 26, 2005
Pg. 1

Brain Cancer Linked To Nerve Agent

'91 Gulf War vets possibly exposed

By Liz Szabo, USA Today

For the first time, a study has found an increase in brain-cancer deaths among Gulf War veterans who might have been exposed to the nerve agent sarin by the destruction of Iraqi weapons in 1991.

About 100,000 of the 350,000 Army soldiers in the Persian Gulf could have been exposed to sarin after soldiers blew up two large ammunition caches in Khamisiyah, Iraq, in March 1991, according to a study commissioned by the military and performed by the Institute of Medicine. The institute advises the government on health policy.

At the time, the military didn't know that the destroyed Iraqi rockets contained sarin, says Michael Kilpatrick, deputy director for the Deployment Health Support Directorate in the Department of Defense. Soldiers showed no signs of exposure to chemical warfare.

Later, however, United Nations inspectors found that some of the weapons contained sarin, which can cause convulsions and death. The military has since contacted about 300,000 veterans who were in or near areas that might have been affected. The potential "hazard area," where shifting winds could have carried traces of chemicals, extended at times as far as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

According to the study, soldiers inside the hazard area were about twice as likely as those outside it to die from brain cancer. Because the actual number of brain-cancer cases was small, the overall mortality rate was the same for veterans in the hazard area and outside the area, according to the study, published in the American Journal of Public Health.

Among unexposed soldiers, researchers found a brain-cancer death rate of 12 per 100,000 from 1991 to 2000, says William Page, director of the study. During the same period, researchers found 25 brain-cancer deaths per 100,000 veterans who were exposed.

"It's a doubling of risk, but it's still a pretty small risk," says Page, a senior program officer at the Institute of Medicine.

The study did not address "Gulf War syndrome," as some have called the collection of ailments experienced by returning veterans. It examined whether soldiers possibly exposed to the destruction of Iraqi weapons were more likely to die for any reason. The study also singled out specific diseases: breathing problems, infections, circulatory problems, digestive ailments, accidents and suicides, as well as four types of cancer.

The study's authors note that sarin has never been shown to cause cancer. Page suggests that researchers follow veterans to see whether the risk of brain cancer, which is believed to develop over 10 to 20 years, changes over time.

Page also notes that the study doesn't prove that being in the hazard area caused brain cancer.

Melissa Bondy, a professor of epidemiology at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, questions why only one or two days of exposure would increase brain-cancer mortality. Other experts note that the study could shed light on the causes of brain tumors, about which doctors know little.

"It's a very solid study," says Faith Davis, a professor at the University of Illinois-Chicago. "It needs to be taken seriously."

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20050726/1a_offlede26.art.htm

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Los Angeles Times

July 26, 2005

N. Korea Pledges To Work Toward Denuclearization

As the six-nation talks open today in Beijing, an American official reiterates that the U.S. has no plans to attack the isolated country.

By Ching-Ching Ni, Times Staff Writer

BEIJING — A fresh round of six-nation talks aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program got underway in the Chinese capital today, with the Pyongyang government pledging to work toward denuclearizing the Korean peninsula and the U.S. offering assurances that it had no plans to attack the impoverished communist country.

"The fundamental thing is to make real progress in realizing the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula," North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan said in opening remarks broadcast live on Chinese television. "This requires very firm political will and a strategic decision of the parties concerned that have interests in ending the threat of nuclear war. We are fully ready and prepared for that."

After three rounds of mostly fruitless talks, Pyongyang walked away from the bargaining table more than a year ago. It agreed to return this month after South Korea dangled a promise of energy aid and the U.S. pledged respect for North Korea's sovereignty. The American delegation reaffirmed that stance today.

"We view the DPRK's sovereignty as a matter of fact," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said in his opening statement, referring to North Korea by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. "The United States has absolutely no intention to invade or attack."

"These talks are at a critical juncture," Hill added. "We do not have the option of walking away from this problem."

On Monday, members of the American delegation held a rare side discussion with their North Korean counterparts. Although Kim and Hill have met before, including a three-hour dinner in Beijing this month, the American side described Monday's encounter between Hill and Kim as a get-acquainted meeting during which they set the terms of the discussions.

"It was a very businesslike exchange of information focused on the way forward," said White House spokesman Scott McClellan. "These weren't negotiating sessions; these were simply discussions to talk about modalities and things of that nature."

During the 75-minute meeting, U.S. officials said, the Americans asked the North Koreans to clarify what they meant when they talked about a "nuclear-free" Korean peninsula.

"We're trying to create a common lexicon, to make sure they're not talking about something totally at odds with what we're talking about," said a senior U.S. official in Beijing who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity. Another issue U.S. officials are concerned about is whether Pyongyang would agree to give up all its nuclear activities. In addition to North Korea's acknowledged plutonium program, the U.S. has accused the government of having a uranium-enrichment program that could be used to make fuel for bombs.

"We've really got to have clarity on those issues," said the U.S. official. "It doesn't make sense to close the back door when you have the front door open."

Though few observers expect a final deal to be reached at these talks, participants are hoping that enough progress will be made to justify another round. In a bid to boost the chances for a breakthrough, this time no ending date for discussions has been set. Previous sessions ended after a set period of three days.

"We do have an agreement to stay here as long as it takes to get things done," the U.S. official said. "We really need to show the world the six-party process can get us somewhere. Everybody's committed to getting something done in this session."

In addition to the United States and North Korea, the talks include China, South Korea, Japan and Russia. As host to the meetings, the Chinese urged everyone to exercise flexibility and practicality.

"The talks will probably encounter various difficulties and disturbance," Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said. "Adhering to the process of peaceful talks is the sole correct choice."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-sixparty26jul26.1.1123679.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Tallahassee Democrat

Tallahassee.com

Posted on Wed, Jul. 27, 2005

Export license checks tied to security gap

LARA JAKES JORDAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Homeland Security agents do not consistently screen sensitive chemical and biological materials to ensure they are being legally exported, the department's inspector general said Tuesday.

Failure by Customs and Border Protection inspectors to update internal databases has led to security gaps in determining whether chemical and biological exports are properly licensed, the Homeland Security Department's internal watchdog said in a report.

The exports, which have military and civilian uses, come under stricter controls when they are sent to countries and entities of concern to U.S. national security.

The department "does not consistently enforce federal export licensing laws at all U.S. ports of exit," acting Inspector General Richard L. Skinner said in the report.

Much of the seven-page document was redacted, and it contained no specifics about the scope and frequency of such lapses.

Monitoring of the exports "is limited by inadequate information and staff resources," Skinner found.

The Bureau of Customs and Border Protection is an arm of the Homeland Security Department.

Customs spokesman Pat Jones said the bureau is updating its databases to make sure that licensing information for chemical and biological exports is easily available at all U.S. ports.

The internal report "wants us to review our resources and examine our export enforcement procedures," Jones said. "And we're doing that."

Part of the problem is trying to check licenses of millions of dollars worth of goods that leave the United States on a daily basis, said Dr. Scott Jones of the Center for International Trade and Security at the University of Georgia.

He also questioned whether agents receive extensive training to help them identify which chemical and biological products can be used for military purposes - and should come under closer scrutiny.

"Things are leaving the country in huge volume, and ideally, Customs officers are looking for licenses and making sure everything is inspected," Jones said. "But overall, you just can't catch everything."

Daryl Kimball of the Arms Control Association in Washington said the security gap "illustrates the difficulty of using export controls as a main line of defense against the spread and development of illegal chemical and biological agents." He said the U.S. needs a multilayered approach against potential weapons proliferation.

ON THE NET

U.S. Customs and Border Protection: <http://www.cbp.gov/>

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New York Times
July 27, 2005

U.S. Tries A New Approach In Talks With North Korea

By Jim Yardley and David E. Sanger

BEIJING, July 26 - The Bush administration appeared to show signs of new flexibility in talks with North Korea on Tuesday, with American and North Korean diplomats meeting here at length to discuss the delicate question of how aid or energy assistance may be provided to the North as it begins the process of dismantling its nuclear weapons program.

Delegations from the two countries met alone here for the second straight day to discuss a proposal the administration put forward in June 2004 before North Korea walked away from talks. Christopher R. Hill, who is leading the American delegation, told reporters that the "businesslike" meeting again raised the prospect of a three-month "freeze" period on North Korea's nuclear activity, followed by a rapid dismantlement of their nuclear plants. In return, the aid spigot from South Korea and other neighbors would begin to open wider.

In Washington, a senior administration official said the approach to the North was loosely patterned on the administration's dealings with Libya in 2003. That negotiation led to Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's decision to give up all the central elements of his nuclear program. But North Korea's nuclear infrastructure is far older, far more advanced and far better hidden, and the official said that at this point the United States was simply trying to "lay the groundwork" for a disarmament deal that many in Washington say Kim Jong Il, North Korea's leader, is unwilling to make.

Mr. Hill declined to give any specifics of the response given by the North Korean vice foreign minister, Kim Kye Gwan. "They talked about the June proposal," Mr. Hill said, according to the Kyodo News Agency of Japan. "They talked about their concern about the sequencing of the proposal and the importance they attach to sequencing, where they don't want to have obligations ahead of other people's obligations."

During Mr. Bush's first term, Condoleezza Rice, now the secretary of state, was highly critical of President Bill Clinton for signing a deal that front-loaded the benefits to North Korea while putting off the North's disarmament. Senior American officials say that is still the administration's position, but they say that Mr. Hill has been given more leeway than his predecessor, James A. Kelly, about what tack to take with the North Koreans, including one-on-one meetings.

Mr. Hill seemed to suggest that the United States would be amenable to a step-by-step process under which North Korean concessions were met by rewards from the United States and other participants in the six-nation talks, South Korea, Japan, China and Russia. Mr. Hill said that when North Korea "makes the decision to dismantle its nuclear program permanently, fully, verifiably," the United States and other participants in the talks would take "corresponding measures."

He described the approach as "words for words and actions for actions."

But the word "verifiably" may be a stumbling point, senior administration officials said, just as it was in decades of arms talks with the former Soviet Union. The United States says it does not know where major elements of North Korea's two suspected nuclear programs are - meaning that it is bound to insist on the right to look almost anywhere in the country. It is a step that many in the administration say they do not believe North Korea is ready to take. The bilateral meeting, held on the opening day of the six-nation talks here on the North Korean nuclear crisis, came as Mr. Hill sent several signals that the United States would take a more flexible negotiating line. In a statement during the opening session of the talks, he said the United States recognized the sovereignty of the North Korean government as "a matter of fact" and offered assurances that the Bush administration did not plan to launch a military attack against the country.

In his opening remarks, Kim Kye Gwan, the top North Korean negotiator, avoided the belligerent tone often adopted by his government in his opening statement. "Those directly involved should make a political and strategic decision to rid the threat of war from the Korean peninsula, and we are ready to do so," he said. "I hope the U.S. and other nations are ready to do the same."

This fourth round of talks comes after North Korea broke off negotiations 13 months ago without publicly responding to the American proposal. The new talks have assumed an air of urgency because of American concerns that North Korea has rapidly expanded its nuclear arsenal. Nuclear experts worry that the North may have enough fuel to make eight or more nuclear bombs.

The previous three rounds of talks in Beijing ended without a breakthrough, and the legitimacy of the six-nation negotiating structure could collapse if this round ends in a stalemate. The Bush administration has already suggested that it might invoke severe economic penalties if this round failed to produce results.

In a side issue, Japan continued to insist that North Korea's past abduction of Japanese citizens should also be included in the talks, a position rejected by North Korea and discouraged by South Korea.

At a briefing after the close of the day's meetings, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said that another plenary session would be held Wednesday and that the envoys from each country might also hold a joint meeting. The spokesman, Qin Gang, said that all the participants held bilateral meetings on Tuesday and that the session between the United States and North Korea was part of a broader warming trend in relations.

"Recently, the atmosphere has improved" between the United States and North Korea, Mr. Qin said.

The Chinese, who have served as host for each round of talks, have staked much of their diplomatic prestige on achieving a breakthrough. Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing asserted in his opening statement that the six-nation process was the only "realistic, viable course" for peacefully resolving the nuclear standoff, according to Chinese state media. But he also urged that the participating countries adopt a gradual approach to negotiations.

"These talks may run into all sorts of difficulties and setbacks," he said. "If you climb up one crag at a time, you can always ascend a mountain."

Jim Yardley reported from Beijing for this article, and David E. Sanger from Washington. Chris Buckley contributed reporting from Beijing.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/27/international/asia/27korea.html?adxnml=1&pagewanted=all&adxnmlx=1122492760-kAFohc25/PBIUDgd+UTOjQ>

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New York Times

Iran Vows to Restart Some Nuclear Activities

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: July 27, 2005

Filed at 2:54 p.m. ETTEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iran said Wednesday it will restart some nuclear activities as soon as August and announced it has developed solid-fuel technology for its ballistic missiles, increasing the accuracy of weapons already able to reach Israel and U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.

The Shahab-3 missile -- able to fly up to 1,200 miles, putting the entire Arabian Peninsula and even parts of Greece and Egypt within its range -- is capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Iran, however, insists its controversial nuclear program does not aim to develop weapons.

The developments come as new hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad prepares to take office Aug. 6. Some Europeans worry he will take a tougher line in negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. Ahmedinejad has said his country will not pursue atomic weapons, but will also not submit to international pressure to abandon its nuclear program.

Iran has decided to resume parts of the program it had frozen under an agreement with the Europeans, outgoing President Mohammad Khatami said Wednesday.

The process to be resumed is an early stage in the development of nuclear fuel -- the conversion of raw uranium into gas, Khatami said. He said Iran would not resume the next stage, enrichment of the gas.

Iran has "no intention to end suspension of uranium enrichment," he said. Enrichment turns the gas into material that can be used either to produce weapons or as fuel for a nuclear reactor to produce energy.

In November, Iran suspended all uranium enrichment-related activities to avoid possible U.N. sanctions and build trust in negotiations with the Europeans, who are trying to impose limits on Iran's program and ensure it cannot produce weapons.

Iran has repeatedly said the suspension is voluntary and temporary. In May, it agreed to continue the suspension in return for a comprehensive plan by Europeans by early August, including economic incentives.

Khatami said that once that plan is produced, it will restart work at the Isfahan conversion facility that reprocesses uranium into gas -- whether or not the Europeans consent.

"The end of the deadline is (when) the Europeans come up with their comprehensive plan," said Khatami. "It was expected that they will agree to Isfahan restarting activities. We prefer to do it with their agreement. If they don't, then the decision to resume activities in Isfahan has already been taken by the ruling system."

Iran has said it does not want to make atomic weapons despite U.S. claims to the contrary, but defends its right to pursue a nuclear program for peaceful purposes.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani told The Associated Press that Iran has taken an "important step forward," successfully testing a solid-fuel engine for the Shahab-3 and developing technology to produce solid fuel domestically.

"We have fully achieved proficiency in solid-fuel technology in producing missiles," said Shamkhani in Iran's first declaration that it has developed full access to solid-fuel missile technology.

This enables the production of solid fuel, which makes missiles more durable and dramatically increases their accuracy. Missiles using liquid fuel are short-lived.

Israeli officials would not immediately comment on the announcement. However, retired Israeli army Gen. Isaac Ben-Israel, a weapons expert now on the faculty of Tel Aviv University, said, "It doesn't matter what kind of fuel they use. What matters is how lethal the warhead is."

"The solid fuel does not matter, it only helps maintenance. The Shahab-3 can reach Israel, and therefore it poses a threat regardless to the kind of fuel used," Ben-Israel said.

Shamkhani said no test flight of a Shahab-3 missile has been carried out using solid fuel. However, he said Iran has used solid fuel with its Fateh-110 short-range missile, although it was unclear if the fuel was made in Iran or came from outside.

The Fateh-110 is a surface-to-surface guided missile with a reported range of about 105 miles and is classified among Iran's most efficient missiles.

The Shahab -- which means "shooting star" in Farsi -- was last successfully tested in 2002. Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards were equipped with it in July 2003.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-Iran-Nuclear.html?>

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New York Times

July 28, 2005

North Korea Seeks U.S. Aid Before It Halts Its Nuclear Program

By Jim Yardley

BEIJING, July 27 - North Korea on Wednesday criticized an American plan to defuse the nuclear crisis, saying the proposal demands too many steps toward dismantling the country's nuclear program before providing any corresponding aid or energy assistance, a senior United States official said in a background meeting with reporters.

North Korea's criticism of the American plan, first proposed in June 2004 before the talks broke off, was not unexpected, noted the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the private nature of the discussions. But it underscored the "fundamental differences" between the countries as participants in the six-nation nuclear talks took on the difficult task of finding common ground to resolve the crisis, now in its third year.

Indeed, the United States and North Korea still do not agree on a definition of denuclearization, the core issue of the talks. North Korea wants a broader definition that, according to some reports, would require the removal of all nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula. The United States, which denies having nuclear weapons in South Korea, has rejected this demand and has insisted that the talks focus solely on North Korea's nuclear program.

But despite the differences, the mood at the talks remained somewhat optimistic, even with respect to the semantics of defining denuclearization. "In terms of finding a common definition," the senior American official said, "I hope we are going to be able to do that."

After two consecutive days of private meetings, the United States and North Korea took a break on Wednesday.

Instead, the Americans held bilateral talks with South Korea, China and Japan, though another meeting with North Korea is tentatively scheduled for Thursday.

The American official said the goal of this round would be to agree on a joint statement that would narrow the disputed issues and lead to a final agreement.

South Korea on Wednesday proposed a plan of nearly simultaneous concessions in exchange for North Korean steps to disarm, a South Korean official, later told reporters.

Song Min Soon, the chief South Korean negotiator, in a speech at the conference, said, "The concerned parties should act simultaneously or in parallel in implementing word-for-word or action-for-action promises they'd make," the Yonhap news agency of South Korea reported. Mr. Song also suggested that the participants in the current talks needed to produce a joint declaration that codified their points of agreement, the New China News Agency reported.

North Korea's vice foreign minister and chief negotiator, Kim Kye Gwan, said his country would not dismantle its nuclear program unless Washington gave North Korea political recognition and security guarantees, and he proposed a gradual approach to possible disarmament.

"It is necessary that the U.S. should promise to end its hostility and ensure a peaceful coexistence with our country," Mr. Kim said, according to Yonhap. "Any promises to be agreed upon should be carried out step by step, starting with the easiest one to be implemented first," Mr. Kim also said.

American negotiators on Wednesday raised the issue of highly enriched uranium, a point of major concern because of their fears that North Korea is developing enough fuel to rapidly build nuclear weapons. "We did not achieve an agreement with them on that," the American official said, "But we did agree to keep talking."

On Thursday, the heads of the delegations from the six nations - the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, China and Russia - will meet to discuss how the talks should proceed, a Japanese official involved in the meeting told reporters. The talks continued to be positive, realistic and businesslike, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "There was no yelling at each other," the Japanese official said, adding that sometimes the delegates even managed to smile.

Chris Buckley contributed reporting for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/28/international/asia/28korea.html?>

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New York Times

July 28, 2005

Iran's President Says Nuclear Work Will Resume

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, July 27 - Iran's departing president said Wednesday that the country's senior officials had decided to resume activities at one nuclear site no matter what incentives were in a European proposal expected next week. Mohammad Khatami made the comment during one of his last meetings with journalists as president. He will be succeeded Aug. 6 by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a conservative who has said Iran has no intention of making nuclear weapons but will not give up its right to peaceful nuclear technology.

Mr. Khatami said, "Whether the Europeans mention our right in their would-be proposals or not, we will definitely resume work in Isfahan," the site of a uranium processing plant.

"It was expected that they will agree to resumption of activities at the plant in Isfahan," he said. "We prefer to do it with their agreement. If they don't agree, then the decision to start activities in Isfahan has already been made by the ruling system."

Under the Iranian Constitution, major state policies, like decisions over nuclear activities, are made by the supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

At the Isfahan plant, 155 miles south of Tehran, uranium ore is converted into gas. The gas can later be fed into centrifuges for enrichment to produce fuel for nuclear bombs or reactors. Iran contends it wants to make its own fuel for nuclear energy.

Britain, Germany and France are to present an incentive proposal in an effort to persuade Iran to maintain the suspension of its uranium enrichment program. Last November, Iran agreed to suspend its enrichment-related activities until the Europeans presented their proposal.

Two senior diplomats involved in the talks, from Britain and France, confirmed that the presentation would occur on schedule, but said that the plan was not yet final.

A senior Iranian official said Tuesday that the European countries had until Aug. 1 to present their proposal or Tehran would go its own way.

The official, Ali Aghamohammadi, the spokesman for Iran's National Security Council, which has been responsible for the negotiations, told state television, "We have told Europeans that there should not be any delay in submitting their proposal." He added, "After Aug. 1 we will make our decision."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/28/international/middleeast/28iran.html?pagewanted=all>

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Kansas City Star

July 25, 2005

Pg. 1

Anthrax Vaccine Under Fire

Refusal rate concerns military; troops speak out

By David Goldstein, The Star's Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON — Shonya McBride remembers very clearly the night she rolled over in her sleep and her hand fell across her husband's chest. She awoke with a start.

"His heart was just pounding out of his chest," she said. That was in 1999, after Travis McBride, a 22-year-old Marine Corps sergeant, had received the second of six mandatory inoculations of the anthrax vaccine.

By the fourth shot, he had developed serious heart problems, chronic fatigue and severe joint pain. McBride never made it to the fifth. Within a year, he was medically discharged.

He had been ordered to take the shots, like probably hundreds of military men and women who believe the vaccine boomeranged and made them seriously ill.

"If I had had the option, I wouldn't have taken it," said McBride, now 28 and an Atchison County sheriff's deputy. For the past two months, however, incoming military personnel have had the option of not taking the anthrax vaccine, as a result of a federal lawsuit won last year by some military personnel who objected.

For now, instead of being threatened with courts-martial and dishonorable discharges, soldiers are told the shots are voluntary.

As a result, half of the military and civilian Defense personnel asked since May to take the shots have declined, according to the Pentagon.

The refusal rate worries the military, which many believe would like to reinstate the mandatory rule for all active duty personnel and reserves.

"That means that half of our (newest) troops could be harmed in an enemy attack and possibly die," said Marianne Coats, a spokeswoman for the Military Vaccine Agency. "This concerns us very much indeed."

Vaccine critics said the situation is an improvement.

Mark Zaid, an attorney involved in the lawsuit, said that much progress has been made since the days of military courts-martial, but added that it remains subjective whether the vaccine being voluntary is a good thing.

What concerns Zaid and other critics is that the anthrax information brochure that the military hands out contains none of the information that comes packaged with the vaccine about risks and medical reactions possibly linked to it.

Beyond the more common nausea, fever and chills, other medical problems possibly linked to the vaccine, according to the manufacturer's insert, include multiple sclerosis, encephalitis, leukemia, blood clots, nervous system disorders, lymphoma and immune deficiencies.

"The Defense Department does not wish for troops to even know the dangers explained on the vaccine's own label," Zaid said.

Col. John Grabenstein, director of the Military Vaccine Agency, said in an e-mail response to a series of questions that since 1998, the military has provided "detailed educational programs" to explain the anthrax vaccine.

The Pentagon and the Food and Drug Administration insist that the vaccine, which has been given to about 1.3 million military and some civilian personnel since 1998, is safe and effective.

Citing a 2002 National Academy of Sciences study, Grabenstein said that the anthrax vaccine posed no greater risk of serious health problems than any other vaccine.

But some former soldiers, outside experts, military activists and other supporters do not think that is accurate.

Former Master Sgt. Dennis Brewster of Augusta, Kan., was diagnosed with an array of medical ailments after the shots, including chronic, widespread joint pain, chronic headaches, chronic fatigue and irritable bowel syndrome.

"I knew how I was before the shot, and I got the shot and I know what happened to me," he said.

No informed consent

The anthrax vaccine has been controversial almost from the beginning.

The FDA licensed it in 1970, but only for anthrax exposure through the skin because the disease was largely confined to the livestock industry.

No human testing of its effectiveness had been done. The testing that was performed, in 1962, was on a different version of the vaccine. The manufacturing process had changed by 1970 when it was licensed.

The vaccine was never approved to protect against anthrax inhalation, which is how troops would encounter the toxin on the battlefield and why the military forced soldiers to be vaccinated.

Still, the Pentagon used it to vaccinate certain units against anthrax before the 1991 Gulf War because of fears that Iraq had biological weapons. Since then, researchers at Kansas State University have found a possible link between the vaccine and the series of mysterious maladies known as Gulf War Syndrome experienced by many veterans of that conflict.

In 1997, as concern heightened about troops deployed to the Persian Gulf and Korean peninsula, the Pentagon made the vaccine mandatory. The regimen was a series of six doses over 18 months, with annual boosters.

The threat of anthrax as a battlefield weapon is probably greater in North Korea than anywhere else, according to Jonathan Tucker, a chemical and biological weapons expert at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute for International Studies.

"I'm not familiar with any evidence that the (Iraq) insurgency or the Taliban has access to anthrax," he said. "North Korea is assessed to have a biological weapons program, and anthrax would probably be an agent in its arsenal." Meanwhile, the sole manufacturer of the vaccine, the BioPort Corp. of Lansing, Mich., has been cited several times by the FDA for quality control problems.

The military shut down the vaccine program last fall when a federal judge ruled in favor of six anonymous former and current Defense Department employees who alleged that the vaccine was being used in a way for which it had not been licensed and should not be forced on anyone.

The government has appealed the ruling. In the meantime, the Pentagon began the voluntary inoculations in May under an emergency-use authority, citing a high bioterrorist threat.

'Blind eye' alleged

Six years after taking the vaccine, McBride's heart problems shadow his family's every move. When he takes his 5-year-old son fishing, he and his wife make sure the child remembers how to dial 911 in case his father has a problem.

At the time, refusing the order to take the vaccine wasn't an option. He loved being a Marine and hoped to make a career out of it.

"I was an enlisted serviceman," he said. "I was told to jump; you asked, 'How high?' I was just doing what I was ordered."

So was Army Sgt. Sandra Larson of Spokane, Wash. In 2000, three months after receiving her final shot while assigned to Fort Riley, Kan., she died of a rare blood disorder at the age of 32.

"It was as if there was something in her that was killing her immune system, shutting her down," her sister, Nancy Rugo, told a congressional committee after her death.

Between 1990 and 2004, 16 people died after taking the vaccine, according to the government's Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System. Most suffered heart, lung and immune system problems, and cancer.

All but five were dead within three months of their last vaccination. In addition, the reporting system shows that nearly 4,500 other recipients have had medical reactions, with nearly 8 percent listed as "serious," meaning the problems were life-threatening, required hospitalization or resulted in a major disability. The reports are submitted by vaccine recipients and providers, relatives, health-care givers and others, but are not necessarily inclusive of everyone who has had a reaction.

The Institute of Medicine, a division of the National Academy of Sciences, called the vaccine reporting data "useful as a sentinel for adverse events." But it cautioned that the reports might be "underreported, incomplete, or duplicative," and that the claims are not always verified by medical officials.

Grabenstein said that anyone who becomes sick after a vaccination "deserves the best care we can give them, whether a vaccine is the cause of their health problem or not."

But Meryl Nass, a Maine internist and leading critic of the vaccine, said the military had turned "a blind eye" to the risks. She has examined numerous vaccine recipients with serious illnesses, including several who served in the Kansas Air National Guard.

"The people who become disabled more often than not have multiple diagnoses," Nass said. "They also, more often than not, have syndromes that are rare or nonexistent in the patients that doctors normally see. Their bodies are not doing what they're supposed to be doing."

Leaving the big B-1 behind

Worries began to seep through the military ranks within two years of the start of the vaccine inoculations.

Pentagon reports show that between 2000 and 2004, 149 service members refused the vaccine.

Some were court-martialed for refusing an order and given bad conduct discharges. About a dozen cases are in stages of appeal.

In a 2002 study, the General Accounting Office surveyed Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve aircrews and found that 16 percent of more than 800 airmen who responded had either transferred, become inactive or left the service between 1998 and 2000 to avoid the shots. An additional 18 percent said they planned to leave soon.

The GAO, now known as the Government Accountability Office, also found that about 84 percent of the pilots and crew members who took the vaccine during that period experienced side effects or adverse reactions, a rate more than double what the manufacturer claimed at the time.

In addition, the study found that about 24 percent of those reactions were systemic — meaning that they affected their entire bodies. That was "more than 100 times higher" than what the manufacturer estimated, the GAO said. The military ordered former Maj. David Towne, who flew for the 128th Bomb Squadron of the Kansas Air National Guard, to take the shot in 1999. Towne was torn because he loved flying the big B-1 bombers, but worried about developing health problems and jeopardizing his civilian career as a commercial pilot.

"I wear a bicycle helmet, I wear my seat belt. I just decided it was not worth it for me to take it," he said. "They told me I was unpatriotic and would regret this for the rest of my life. They questioned my integrity."

Towne, who is 39 and now lives in Ohio, offered to resign but received a general discharge instead. He has appealed.

"These are people who volunteer their lives and livelihood to protect America," said Peter Martuscello of Wichita, a 57-year old former Kansas Air National Guard technical sergeant who was medically discharged after taking the vaccine. He developed Guillain-Barre Syndrome, an immune disorder, and other problems.

"To dump on people like that is crazy," Martuscello said. "That's the sad part. They gave you no option."

And no information on possible risks, according to several former soldiers who took the vaccine and became ill. Brewster said that when his unit in the 184th Bomb Wing of the Kansas Air National Guard got a briefing about the vaccine in June 1999, "They didn't tell us about any risk. They gave us the basic standard speech," he said. "They said there was some talk out there, but it was all Internet hype."

A week after receiving the first shot, Brewster started feeling like he had the flu. Then a powerful fatigue came over him. His ankles, knees, shoulders, elbows and hands all began to hurt. He also got severe headaches. By the fourth shot, his health had further deteriorated. He was in and out of the hospital for intestinal surgery and heart problems. He also became hyperallergic.

Brewster retired in 2001 under honorable conditions after 23 years of service. He has a one-man home remodeling business that allows him to take time off when he's feeling badly and runs out of energy. He sleeps a lot.

"A lot of the guys hid the illness and still are," said Brewster, who had been a full-time civilian employee of the Guard, in addition to his military service. "Had I not ended up in the hospital, I probably would have tried to hide mine."

The anthrax vaccine, he said, "cost me my career."

<http://www.kansascity.com/mld/kansascity/living/health/12214696.htm>

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Nuclear Security: Actions Needed by DOE to Improve Security of Weapons-Grade Nuclear Material at Its Energy, Science, and Environment Sites,

by Gene Aloise, director, natural resources and environment before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, House Committee on Government Reform. GAO-05-934T, July 26.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-934T>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d05934thigh.pdf>

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Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Ajc.com

Drill tests public health units' response to attack

BY STACY SHELTON, and YOLANDA RODRIGUEZ

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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If bioterrorists infect metro Atlantans with a potentially deadly disease, we're going to need more clipboards.

And nurses. And ice (if it's a hot, humid day in July).

Thursday's multi-county bioterrorism drill, the largest so far in the state, highlighted seemingly simple — if not obvious — needs.

"Minor things like that actually make a big difference," said Leticia Mathis, bioterrorism training coordinator for Cobb and Douglas Public Health.

Under the scenario, 100,000 people attending the Dobbins Air Reserve Base air show in Marietta could have been infected with anthrax, which is fatal if not treated. Antibiotics, in the form of pills, would have to come from the Strategic National Stockpile administered by the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Overall, coordinators counted the drill a success. But there were different problems at different sites.

At Palmer Middle School in Kennesaw, there were only four nurses to screen about 400 people who showed up to play victims. As they waited to get inside, they stood in the sun and gamely tried to fill out health information forms using their free hands as writing surfaces.

Staff called a timeout, doubled the number of nurses and handed out clipboards.

Minutes later the school's main hallway was packed with the chatty volunteers who were guided through the lines to get the bottles of the mock antibiotics needed for the drill.

"We learned that if there are glitches in the system it's not wrong to stop and regroup," said Dr. Alpha Fowler Bryan, director of Cobb and Douglas Public Health.

Meeting deadlines

At the Ashby MARTA station in west Atlanta, there weren't enough volunteers. Less than 60 people showed up to play victim, far short of the goal of 250.

Fulton County public health worker Georgia Goseer, the site manager, said, "It's going to be an ongoing process of trying to get volunteers."

Goseer said her most requested item of the day was ice, called in to the command headquarters at the state Department of Human Resources' emergency management center in downtown Atlanta. She and her fellow public health workers were doing their own melting, waiting for their victim volunteers to return to the MARTA parking lot for a sign-off.

The goal for Thursday's drill was to see if the five metro Atlanta public health districts could screen and supply antibiotic pills to at least 250 people an hour at each of nine locations in Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton and Gwinnett counties. While too few volunteers showed up at most of the "rally points" to really push the public health workers, the ones who did were handled quickly enough to meet the deadline. About 1,800 "victims" participated. If a highly infectious disease ever really breaks out here, state officials say they would have only 48 hours to screen and treat more than 4 million metro Atlantans.

"When you look at the magnitude of what we're doing, it's incredible," said Tom Bennett, director of emergency preparedness for the Clayton County Board of Health and exercise commander for the Clayton drill. "We learned that we can put 300-plus people through in an hour with one site. . . . I was extremely pleased."

Clayton's 320 volunteers included North Clayton High School's varsity and junior varsity football teams.

Training drills

Lisbeth Ruiz de Nuñez, a geographer for the USDA Forest Service, said she volunteered for the drill in Cobb because "I wanted to be prepared for a real event."

Since 9/11, training drills for worst-case scenarios have become common events. Earlier this month, state and local officials trained for an accident at a nuclear plant in southeast Alabama and a school bus hijacking in Cherokee County.

Bioterrorism is another threat. Scenarios could include terrorists flying crop dusters to spread germs or poisoning public water supplies. DHR, the oversight agency for public health workers, has five-year, \$36.5 million federal grants for training, personnel and supplies for prevention and preparation.

The agency started planning Thursday's drill about a year ago, long before terrorist bombs this month killed 140 people in London and Egypt.

Sharon Underwood, an AmeriCorps worker from East Point, said she was happy to help.

"I think you should be ready because things tend to happen when you get comfortable. We should all be reminded that the world we live in is not safe."

<http://www.ajc.com/news/content/metro/0705/29bioterror.html>

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Washington Times

July 29, 2005

Pg. 11

China Stocks Nukes As Anti-U.S. Tactic

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

China is building up its nuclear forces as part of a secret strategy targeting the United States, according to a former Chinese diplomat.

China's strategy calls for "proactive defense," and senior Chinese Communist Party leaders think that building nuclear arms is the key to countering U.S. power in Asia and other parts of the world, said Chen Yonglin, a diplomat who defected to Australia two months ago.

A recent comment by a Chinese general shows that Beijing's leaders are prepared to launch "a pre-emptive attack on the country considered a huge threat to China," Mr. Chen said.

Chinese Maj. Gen. Zhu Chenghu told reporters two weeks ago that China is prepared to use nuclear weapons against "hundreds" of U.S. cities if a conflict breaks out over Taiwan.

The former diplomat, who until recently was posted to the Chinese Consulate in Sydney, said the number of Chinese nuclear warheads is a closely guarded secret.

Asked about a Pentagon report revealing that China has 20 nuclear warheads that can reach almost all of the United States, Mr. Chen said, "We don't know the exact number."

"Everything about nuclear weapons is held by a very limited number of people," he said. "Even sometime vice ministers may not know because it is strictly controlled by the general staff and central party leaders."

The Pentagon report to Congress made public last week stated that China is "qualitatively and quantitatively improving its strategic missile force."

"It is fielding more survivable missiles capable of targeting India, Russia, virtually all of the United States and the Asia-Pacific theater as far south as Australia and New Zealand," the report said.

China's nuclear weapons are developed and built in secret under the direction of a company Mr. Chen identified as the Nuclear Energy Company. The company builds both civilian nuclear-power stations and warheads for missiles and bombers.

"It sounds like a nongovernment company, but it is totally top secret," he said.

Mr. Chen, who is visiting the United States and testified before a House committee last week, said that during internal discussions among Communist Party and government leaders and military commanders, military leaders often have urged going to war against Taiwan, a self-governing island -- also known as the Republic of China -- that broke with the mainland in 1949.

"I've heard a lot about the results of those meetings, and most of the military forces leaders advocate the use of force the earlier the better to solve the Taiwan issue," Mr. Chen said.

He said China's long-term strategy toward the United States was outlined by the late communist leader Deng Xiaoping in the phrase "hide our capabilities; bide our time."

"That means don't draw any attention of the Western world -- and especially the United States, to what China is doing," Mr. Chen said.

China's leaders fear the current U.S. policy of engagement with China could shift to one of "containing" China, he said.

"If the policy of the United States changes to containment, there will be no Olympic Games, there will be no business and there will be no peaceful rise," he said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20050728-110724-3616r.htm>

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