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BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS UPDATE

Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with nuclear, biological and chemical threats and attacks. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

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Houston Chronicle
July 30, 2005

Rice Updating State Department Focus

By Anne Gearan, Associated Press

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice proposed a management shuffle at the State Department on Friday to better focus on links between terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Iraq and the weapons never found there after Saddam Hussein's ouster weren't mentioned.

The changes, which must be approved by Congress, would merge and rearrange State Department offices still primarily organized around Cold War models of arms control, Rice said.

The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, demonstrated how the world had changed since the arms race with the Soviet Union, Rice said.

"Rather than deterring a single state with a massive nuclear arsenal, we must defend ourselves against shadowy networks of stateless enemies, some looking to buy, others looking to sell, the world's most dangerous weapons," Rice told an audience.

A new office within the realigned bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation would "focus exclusively on the threat posed by terrorists seeking weapons of mass destruction," Rice said.

Rice did not mention Saddam, al-Qaida or the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/ssistory.mpl/nation/3288554>

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New York Times

July 30, 2005

6 Nations Work On Principles For North Korean Nuclear Talks

By Chris Buckley

BEIJING, July 29 - Six-nation talks in Beijing aimed at ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program entered a new stage on Friday, as the countries began to wrangle over a joint statement of principles that may move them toward further disarmament negotiations.

"Today I think we went into a new phase," the United States' chief negotiator, Christopher R. Hill, told reporters. "We began to look at actual texts, actual words on paper."

The United States and North Korea met privately again on Friday - the fourth such meeting since the formal talks convened in Beijing four days ago - to discuss the proposed joint statement. Mr. Hill said those discussions had been difficult and disagreements remained. But common ground is emerging, he said. "They, too, were trying to stay in the ballpark," Mr. Hill said of North Korea's terms. "We've got a way to go," he added. "We are addressing the tough questions."

The talks, which include China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, have involved a daily multiple-interpreter waltz of bilateral meetings and joint discussions. The chief South Korean negotiator, Song Min Soon, told reporters that the talks may extend into next week, China's official New China News Agency reported. The agency also reported that American and North Korean delegates were to meet privately again on Saturday, but Mr. Hill would not confirm that.

Mr. Hill, talking to reporters as he left his hotel room in the morning, said, "We are here for the long haul, and we are here until we make some progress."

He likened the negotiations to pushing a rock up a "very steep hill," and said the participating countries needed to maintain momentum if they were to avoid damaging delays.

The Americans and North Koreans remain at loggerheads over the "sequence" of North Korean disarmament moves and corresponding rewards from the United States and its allies, Mr. Hill said. North Korea has insisted that the United States resume economic aid and give the government enhanced political recognition before it moves to disarm; but the United States has insisted that North Korea disarm first.

"It's not going to be so easy, because the D.P.R.K. has ideas about how we have to normalize relations," Mr. Hill said, referring to North Korea as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The two sides also discussed the North's uranium enrichment program, which it could be using to assemble nuclear weapons, he said.

Mr. Hill suggested that the United States and North Korea could still inch past their deep disagreements, including whether North Korea could have a civilian nuclear power program, to agree on principles and then leave specifics for future talks. "I believe that if everyone agrees where we're going, we can agree on the intermediate steps," he said after the meetings. "We're making progress."

The most difficult negotiations still lie ahead, however, as the countries move from broad principles to specific steps and concessions, observers said.

"It's encouraging that we've now had four rounds of bilaterals, but we'll need many more of them to achieve a breakthrough," said Peter Beck, a Seoul-based analyst of North Korea's nuclear program for the International Crisis Group, a private organization that provides advice on security issues. The "Agreed Framework" that the United States and North Korea signed in October 1994 "took hundreds of hours of negotiations," he noted.

Under that agreement, North Korea froze its nuclear reactors at Yongbyon, 60 miles north of Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, and in return the United States supported an international effort to supply North Korea with oil and promised to help build two internationally monitored nuclear reactors.

That deal fell apart in 2002, when North Korea conspicuously refused to deny American claims that it was secretly making weapons-grade uranium and then announced it would restart the frozen reactors.

"Even just a symbolic statement is a lot of work," Mr. Beck said of the current Beijing talks, "and the signs are that they haven't started the give and take of real, substantial negotiations."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/30/international/asia/30korea.html?>

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New York Times
July 31, 2005

U.S. And North Korea Meet At 6-Nation Nuclear Talks

By Jim Yardley

BEIJING, July 30 - The United States and North Korea held another private session to try to narrow their differences, while all six of the nations meeting here in the North Korean nuclear talks spent Saturday considering a draft joint statement circulated by China.

No details of the draft were available, and negotiators have suggested that any joint document emerging from this round of nuclear talks would probably be a broad statement of shared principles that left the most divisive problems for future discussions.

Christopher R. Hill, the top American envoy, cautioned that composing even a broad statement of principles would be time-consuming.

"This is not going to be finished today or even tomorrow, because even though the texts will be rather brief, they are rather important, too," Mr. Hill said Saturday morning as he left his hotel to attend the day's meetings.

"There will be lines in them which don't look so interesting to perhaps you, but actually they mean a lot to the six participants," he added.

A senior American official said the negotiators were trying to agree on a statement of about six or seven broad principles. The official said the American negotiators wanted to avoid a statement that provided for a freeze on North Korea's nuclear program that was suggested in past proposals, instead supporting a clause calling for dismantling the program. "A freeze would be an intermediate step, and we don't want that," the official said. The meetings in Beijing this week are the first negotiations on the renegade nuclear program in North Korea, since it broke off talks 13 months ago. This fourth round of talks, involving China, Japan, North Korea, Russia South Korea and the United States, began Tuesday, and at five days and counting is the longest of the four rounds.

Differences between North Korea and the United States remain vast. The two countries disagree on how quickly North Korea should receive aid and energy assistance after it begins to dismantle its nuclear program. How the program would be monitored and verified is also contentious.

The six nations, which have rotated between joint sessions and bilateral meetings, spent the day working on the language of a joint statement. The official New China News Agency reported that China had circulated a draft. It is unclear how many "shared principles" will be included in any statement, but an official in Washington has said the first two should be a commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and a North Korean pledge not to transfer nuclear technology to another state or group.

Mr. Hill has said throughout the week that he felt confident a shared definition on denuclearization could be found. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/31/international/asia/31korea.html>

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USA Today
August 1, 2005

Pg. 1

Nation Unready For Germ Attacks

Bioterror defense lags despite 4 years, \$20B

By Mimi Hall, USA Today

WASHINGTON — The nation is woefully unprepared to respond to a bioterrorism attack despite a \$20 billion government investment in bioterrorism preparedness since 2001, according to top government and public health officials and members of Congress.

"We're almost four years after 9/11, and we've made maybe six months' worth of progress," says Irwin Redlener of Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness. Redlener says the programs could be run more effectively. "We're wasting billions and billions of dollars," he says.

Former Homeland Security secretary Tom Ridge says a biological attack with a contagious agent is his greatest fear. With respect to preparedness, "we're not where we want to be," he says.

Michael Chertoff, the current secretary, named a new chief medical officer last month and said he intends to put more emphasis on potentially catastrophic attacks. But bioterrorism preparedness rests largely with the Department

of Health and Human Services (HHS), which is responsible for stocking lifesaving antidotes, sharing information among labs and hospitals and helping communities deliver aid in an emergency.

"This challenge is larger than almost anything we've ever faced," says William Raub, who runs HHS' public health emergency preparedness. The government may be years away from being adequately prepared, he says, but "I don't think anyone here has anything to apologize for." Among the problems:

*The government has created a national stockpile of medical equipment and supplies and can move the supplies to any city within 12 hours of an attack, but local officials aren't prepared to deliver the material to citizens in time to save lives. "Not a single city in America is prepared," says Richard Falkenrath, a former top White House aide on homeland security.

*A \$5.6 billion, 10-year government program to spur pharmaceutical firms to develop vaccines and antidotes has yet to produce the drugs. President Bush announced Project BioShield in 2003. The funding is for encouraging firms to invest in research to produce antidotes. The government would buy much of the new drugs if they met certain standards.

But major pharmaceutical companies have ignored the program in part out of liability concerns. "Millions and millions of lives are at stake," says Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn.

*The nation's 5,000 hospitals couldn't handle a surge of patients. "Hospital preparedness is an exercise in fantasy," says former HHS preparedness chief Jerome Hauer, who developed the nation's first bioterrorism response plan for New York City. "Most people think having 100 beds is surge capacity. But most cities, if they were to have 10,000-15,000 patients, would be brought to their knees."

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20050801/1a_lede01_dom.art.htm

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New York Times

August 1, 2005

Seoul To Offer Electricity As Reward If North Korea Ends Nuclear Work

By Chris Buckley

BEIJING, July 31 - A planned joint statement from the six-nation talks in Beijing aimed at persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program will include a South Korean offer to send electricity to North Korea as a reward, the chief American negotiator, Christopher R. Hill, said Sunday.

"The electricity offer of course is in the draft agreement," Mr. Hill said after a day of negotiating the proposed statement.

South Korea's offer to supply two million megawatts of electricity a year to North Korea means that North Korea could "get out of this business" of nuclear activities, including power plants, Mr. Hill said earlier. South Korea "has made a very good electricity plan," he said after meeting on Sunday with the South's chief negotiator, Song Min Soon, and North Korea "has much to work on without talking about nuclear-type things."

Mr. Hill said that on Monday negotiators would consider a second draft of the statement written by the host country, China. He also said the statement would include promises of "economic cooperation" if North Korea ended its nuclear programs.

Kent E. Calder, an expert on Northeast Asian energy politics at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University, said the offer "does provide something that's badly needed by North Korea, given its desperate energy situation, but from a South Korean point of view it doesn't compromise Washington." The Bush administration has resisted making direct offers of aid to North Korea.

But some experts said the offer's unbudgeted costs and North Korea's dilapidated power grid might damage its attractiveness at the negotiating table and threaten its viability.

"It was very much a symbolically driven gesture," said Peter Hayes, the executive director of the Nautilus Institute, a research group based in San Francisco that studies North Korea. "It could be a very important long-term project, but in the shorter term it's just not the right project to hand the North Koreans in return for nuclear disarmament."

North Korea said it might rejoin an international nuclear nonproliferation treaty and accept international inspections of its nuclear facilities "if the nuclear issue finds a satisfactory solution" and the United States accepted "peaceful coexistence."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/01/international/asia/01korea.html>

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New York Times
August 1, 2005

Iran Threatens To Resume Uranium Enrichment

By Nazila Fathi and Alan Cowell

TEHRAN, July 31 - Iran said Sunday that it would resume activities at one of its nuclear sites, but said it would keep its freeze on a more advanced process needed to make fuel or weapons.

The European Union, which has been seeking to negotiate an exit to the Iranian nuclear impasse, responded by saying Iran would jeopardize future talks if it carried through on its threat, risking a significant worsening of the dispute over its nuclear facilities.

Hamidreza Assefi, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, said Iran planned to tell the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in a letter of its decision to restart work at the Uranium Conversion Facility in Isfahan.

The Iranian news agency quoted Mr. Assefi as saying Iran had taken the step because the European Union had failed to meet a deadline to produce new proposals to end the impasse.

The European Union denies that it agreed to a Sunday deadline and said in a statement issued by the British Foreign Office on Sunday that it would give "full and detailed proposals" to Iran in a week. The proposals are expected to include economic incentives intended to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear activities.

Some experts said the Iranian threat was largely symbolic because it related to producing uranium gas rather than taking the next step of enriching the gas to turn it into fuel for reactors or weapons.

Under international pressure, Iran suspended its nuclear programs in November 2004 but has frequently threatened to restart them, insisting that it has a sovereign right to do so. The United States believes Iran wants to build nuclear weapons but Iran says its programs are for civilian purposes. Since last November, Iran and the European Union - represented by Britain, France and Germany - have been negotiating over Iran's demands for an independent nuclear program.

The British statement said that if Iran resumed nuclear activities, it would be taking an "unnecessary and damaging" step that would make negotiations "very difficult to continue." In that case, the statement said, the European Union would take the issue to the International Atomic Energy in Vienna.

In Tehran, Mr. Assefi said, "We were waiting for the Europeans to offer us their proposal."

The European negotiators had said they plan to offer Iran a package of economic, political, security, and technological incentives by Monday. But Iran has warned that no incentive could persuade it to quit its uranium enrichment program.

The Uranium Conversion Facility turns uranium ore, known as yellowcake, into gas. The gas can later be fed into centrifuges and enriched to be used as fuel in nuclear plants or, if highly enriched, in nuclear weapons. Iran said operations at its nuclear site in Natanz, where the centrifuges are kept, would remain suspended.

The head of Iran's negotiating team, Hassan Rowhani, in a progress report on Sunday to President Mohammad Khatami, said he believed the Europeans were planning to delay offering their final proposal in order to see what the policies of the incoming president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, would be. Mr. Ahmadinejad is scheduled to take office on Aug. 6.

Mr. Assefi said the decision to restart work at Isfahan was final and its activities would resume under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency, but it was not clear if the agency had agreed to that step.

"We do not want to do any work without the supervision of agency," Mr. Assefi said. The agency's seals would be removed in the presence of the agency's inspectors, who are currently in Iran, he added.

Mr. Assefi said Iran had no interest in interrupting its negotiations with Europe, "but we can no longer postpone our people's demand for peaceful use of nuclear technology."

Nazila Fathi reported from Tehran for this article, and Alan Cowell from London.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/01/international/middleeast/01iran.html>

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Jerusalem Post
August 1, 2005

New Estimates On Iranian Nukes

By Orly Halpern, The Jerusalem Post

Israel has adjusted its estimates of when it believes Iran will have nuclear bombs due to the belief that that Iran no longer runs independent military and civilian nuclear development programs. According to the new estimates, Iran will probably have a nuclear bomb by 2012, but could have the capability as early as 2008 "if all goes well for it," a high ranking IDF commander told *The Jerusalem Post* yesterday.

"We no longer think that a secret military track runs independent of the civilian one," said the officer in an interview at IDF Headquarters in Tel-Aviv. "If it were then they could acquire weapons in 2007... We have changed our estimation. Now we think the military track is dependent on the civilian one. However, from a certain point it will be able to run independently. But not earlier than 2008."

Iran has been developing nuclear capacity which, it says, is only for peaceful civilian purposes allowed under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But many countries fear that Iran is secretly developing nuclear military capacity as well.

Last January IDF Intelligence Branch chief Maj.-Gen. Aharon Ze'evi Farkash said in a lecture at the University of Haifa's National Security Studies Center that if Teheran did not stop its uranium enrichment activities, it would develop its first atomic weapon between 2007 and 2009. He also said that Iran was six months away from enriching uranium required to build a nuclear bomb, a step that has been described as the "point of no return."

That date passed last month and Israel does not believe that Iran has yet achieved the enrichment milestone. The source now believes the "point of no return" could occur within a few months to a year.

The source gave no evidence for the allegations of a secret military tract but said that Israel has knowledge of individuals from the Iranian military and defense establishments who are involved in activities related to a nuclear program.

"We have seen for a few years activities of people not from the civilian program who are dealing in acquisition and research [of nuclear development], among other things," the source stated. "We don't know if they are a group, but they have linkage to military and defense ministries."

What most concerns Israel right now is the possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran in 2008, especially given that the US is more concerned with the later possible date of 2012.

In November Iran voluntarily ceased its uranium enrichment program as part of talks with France, Germany and Britain regarding its nuclear development program. Iran is threatening to renew its uranium enrichment process.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPArticle/ShowFull&cid=1122776414371&p=1101615860782>

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Dallas Morning News

July 31, 2005

Gulf Vets' Brain Cancer Risk Assessed

Study from Gulf War finds those exposed to chemicals likelier to die

By Laura Beil, Dallas Morning News

Veterans involved in the demolition of chemical weapons in the first Iraq war appear to have an increased likelihood of dying from brain cancer, a new study has found.

In the new study, researchers from the National Academy of Sciences and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs analyzed death records of the Army veterans who were exposed to the plume, comparing them with soldiers not exposed. After almost 10 years, one cause of death seemed out of the ordinary: veterans from Khamisiyah had twice the risk of dying from brain cancer.

"We certainly don't know that sarin is the cause," said William Page of the national academy. "There is an association."

The new study appears this month in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

In this study, a two-fold increased risk meant that about 12 to 13 more soldiers among 100,000 exposed died from brain cancer than should have occurred naturally over the 10 years.

"This is an intriguing finding," Dr. Page said. "It's not definitive evidence."

But Dr. Robert Haley of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas points to other trends in the data that suggest the chemical exposure at Khamisiyah was responsible for the excess deaths from brain cancer. Dr. Haley was not involved in the current study, but has led other studies of illnesses among Gulf War veterans. He also sits on a Veterans Affairs research advisory committee for Gulf War illness.

In the Khamisiyah study, soldiers were more likely to develop brain cancer if they had longer exposure to the plume, a trend consistent with something in the air causing the illness. Also, Dr. Haley pointed out, most of the malignancies appeared during the latest years of the study, which researchers would also expect if the cancers were due to some exposure that had occurred at the beginning.

"That's a very convincing story for a causal effect," he said.

However, he and others say, more research is necessary to confirm the finding. Scientists need to see whether the trend continues over time, and investigate a possible mechanism on the cellular level that may explain how something at Khamisiyah may have led to cancer in some soldiers.

Dr. Haley said that brain cancer would be consistent with Gulf War veterans being exposed to an agent that created nerve cell damage. His research has found illness with an array of brain symptoms and increased rates of Lou Gehrig's disease.

"When you have brain cell injury, there is a possibility you'll have neurodegenerative illnesses associated with it," he said.

He cautioned that even in this study, brain cancer was still a rare cause of death.

"The average veteran should not become despondent and think they're going to get brain cancer," he said.

<http://www.dallasnews.com/s/dws/news/healthscience/stories/073105dnnatvets.2cea26f.html>

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USA Today
August 1, 2005
Page 6A

Iran prods EU, says it may restart nuke work today

Reuters

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran said it would restart some sensitive nuclear fuel activities today unless it received European Union proposals to break a diplomatic impasse over the country's atomic program.

In London, the British Foreign Office said EU members Britain, France and Germany had informed Iran only that "full and detailed proposals" would be delivered in a week.

The EU plans to offer economic and political incentives in return for Iran's indefinite suspension of uranium enrichment, nuclear fuel reprocessing and related activities.

The EU and the United States suspect Iran wants to use these processes to make nuclear weapons and say if Iran restarts them, they will ask the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran.

Iran insists its program is peaceful and it only wants nuclear power to generate electricity.

"If we do not receive the EU proposal today, tomorrow morning we will start part of (the) activities in Isfahan's uranium conversion facility," Ali Aghamohammadi, spokesman for the Supreme National Security Council, told state television on Sunday.

The conversion plant near the city of Isfahan takes processed uranium ore, mined in Iran's central desert, and turns it into uranium hexafluoride gas. The gas can be pumped into centrifuges that spin at supersonic speed to enrich uranium. Enriched uranium is used in nuclear power plants, but if it's highly enriched, it can be used in atomic weapons.

Any resumption of activities at the Isfahan plant could mean Iran had broken an agreement it made in Paris in November.

According to the agreement, Iran committed, "on a voluntary basis, to continue and extend its suspension to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities" and "all tests or production at any uranium conversion installation."

The White House had no comment Sunday beyond reiterating that the United States will seek sanctions at the U.N. if Iran resumes its nuclear program. Iran said it had little to fear from referral to the Security Council. Russia and China, which both hold a veto as permanent members of the council, have close trade links with Iran and are less keen on sanctions.

"There is no legal basis for Iran's case to be referred to the U.N. Security Council. Besides, being referred to the council is not the end of the world. Some officials even believe it is better to be referred to the council," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said.

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20050801/a_iran01.art.htm

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Washington Post
August 2, 2005
Pg. 1

Iran Is Judged 10 Years From Nuclear Bomb

U.S. Intelligence Review Contrasts With Administration Statements

By Dafna Linzer, Washington Post Staff Writer

A major U.S. intelligence review has projected that Iran is about a decade away from manufacturing the key ingredient for a nuclear weapon, roughly doubling the previous estimate of five years, according to government sources with firsthand knowledge of the new analysis.

The carefully hedged assessments, which represent consensus among U.S. intelligence agencies, contrast with forceful public statements by the White House. Administration officials have asserted, but have not offered proof, that Tehran is moving determinedly toward a nuclear arsenal. The new estimate could provide more time for diplomacy with Iran over its nuclear ambitions. President Bush has said that he wants the crisis resolved diplomatically but that "all options are on the table."

The new National Intelligence Estimate includes what the intelligence community views as credible indicators that Iran's military is conducting clandestine work. But the sources said there is no information linking those projects directly to a nuclear weapons program. What is clear is that Iran, mostly through its energy program, is acquiring and mastering technologies that could be diverted to bombmaking.

The estimate expresses uncertainty about whether Iran's ruling clerics have made a decision to build a nuclear arsenal, three U.S. sources said. Still, a senior intelligence official familiar with the findings said that "it is the judgment of the intelligence community that, left to its own devices, Iran is determined to build nuclear weapons." At no time in the past three years has the White House attributed its assertions about Iran to U.S. intelligence, as it did about Iraq in the run-up to the March 2003 invasion. Instead, it has pointed to years of Iranian concealment and questioned why a country with as much oil as Iran would require a large-scale nuclear energy program.

The NIE addresses those assertions and offers alternative views supporting and challenging the assumptions they are based on. Those familiar with the new judgments, which have not been previously detailed, would discuss only limited elements of the estimate and only on the condition of anonymity, because the report is classified, as is some of the evidence on which it is based.

Top policymakers are scrutinizing the review, several administration officials said, as the White House formulates the next steps of an Iran policy long riven by infighting and competing strategies. For three years, the administration has tried, with limited success, to increase pressure on Iran by focusing attention on its nuclear program. Those efforts have been driven as much by international diplomacy as by the intelligence.

The NIE, ordered by the National Intelligence Council in January, is the first major review since 2001 of what is known and what is unknown about Iran. Additional assessments produced during Bush's first term were narrow in scope, and some were rejected by advocates of policies that were inconsistent with the intelligence judgments. One such paper was a 2002 review that former and current officials said was commissioned by national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley, who was then deputy adviser, to assess the possibility for "regime change" in Iran. Those findings described the Islamic republic on a slow march toward democracy and cautioned against U.S. interference in that process, said the officials, who would describe the paper's classified findings only on the condition of anonymity.

The new estimate takes a broader approach to the question of Iran's political future. But it is unable to answer whether the country's ruling clerics will still be in control by the time the country is capable of producing fissile material. The administration keeps "hoping the mullahs will leave before Iran gets a nuclear weapons capability," said an official familiar with policy discussions.

Intelligence estimates are designed to alert the president of national security developments and help guide policy. The new Iran findings were described as well documented and well written, covering such topics as military capabilities, expected population growth and the oil industry. The assessments of Iran's nuclear program appear in a separate annex to the NIE known as a memorandum to holders.

"It's a full look at what we know, what we don't know and what assumptions we have," a U.S. source said.

Until recently, Iran was judged, according to February testimony by Vice Adm. Lowell E. Jacoby, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, to be within five years of the capability to make a nuclear weapon. Since 1995, U.S. officials have continually estimated Iran to be "within five years" from reaching that same capability. So far, it has not.

The new estimate extends the timeline, judging that Iran will be unlikely to produce a sufficient quantity of highly enriched uranium, the key ingredient for an atomic weapon, before "early to mid-next decade," according to four sources familiar with that finding. The sources said the shift, based on a better understanding of Iran's technical limitations, puts the timeline closer to 2015 and in line with recently revised British and Israeli figures.

The estimate is for acquisition of fissile material, but there is no firm view expressed on whether Iran would be ready by then with an implosion device, sources said.

The timeline is portrayed as a minimum designed to reflect a program moving full speed ahead without major technical obstacles. It does not take into account that Iran has suspended much of its uranium-enrichment work as part of a tenuous deal with Britain, France and Germany. Iran announced yesterday that it intends to resume some of that work if the European talks fall short of expectations.

Sources said the new timeline also reflects a fading of suspicions that Iran's military has been running its own separate and covert enrichment effort. But there is evidence of clandestine military work on missiles and centrifuge research and development that could be linked to a nuclear program, four sources said.

Last month, U.S. officials shared some data on the missile program with U.N. nuclear inspectors, based on drawings obtained last November. The documents include design modifications for Iran's Shahab-3 missile to make the room required for a nuclear warhead, U.S. and foreign officials said.

"If someone has a good idea for a missile program, and he has really good connections, he'll get that program through," said Gordon Oehler, who ran the CIA's nonproliferation center and served as deputy director of the presidential commission on weapons of mass destruction. "But that doesn't mean there is a master plan for a nuclear weapon."

The commission found earlier this year that U.S. intelligence knows "disturbingly little" about Iran, and about North Korea.

Much of what is known about Tehran has been learned through analyzing communication intercepts, satellite imagery and the work of U.N. inspectors who have been investigating Iran for more than two years. Inspectors uncovered facilities for uranium conversion and enrichment, results of plutonium tests, and equipment bought illicitly from Pakistan -- all of which raised serious concerns but could be explained by an energy program. Inspectors have found no proof that Iran possesses a nuclear warhead design or is conducting a nuclear weapons program.

The NIE comes more than two years after the intelligence community assessed, wrongly, in an October 2002 estimate that then-Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was reconstituting his nuclear program. The judgments were declassified and made public by the Bush administration as it sought to build support for invading Iraq five months later.

At a congressional hearing last Thursday, Gen. Michael V. Hayden, deputy director of national intelligence, said that new rules recently were imposed for crafting NIEs and that there would be "a higher tolerance for ambiguity," even if it meant producing estimates with less definitive conclusions.

The Iran NIE, sources said, includes creative analysis and alternative theories that could explain some of the suspicious activities discovered in Iran in the past three years. Iran has said its nuclear infrastructure was built for energy production, not weapons.

Assessed as plausible, but unverifiable, is Iran's public explanation that it built the program in secret, over 18 years, because it feared attack by the United States or Israel if the work was exposed.

In January, before the review, Vice President Cheney suggested Iranian nuclear advances were so pressing that Israel may be forced to attack facilities, as it had done 23 years earlier in Iraq.

In an April 2004 speech, John R. Bolton -- then the administration's point man on weapons of mass destruction and now Bush's temporarily appointed U.N. ambassador -- said: "If we permit Iran's deception to go on much longer, it will be too late. Iran will have nuclear weapons."

But the level of certainty, influenced by diplomacy and intelligence, appears to have shifted.

Asked in June, after the NIE was done, whether Iran had a nuclear effort underway, Bolton's successor, Robert G. Joseph, undersecretary of state for arms control, said: "I don't know quite how to answer that because we don't have perfect information or perfect understanding. But the Iranian record, plus what the Iranian leaders have said . . . lead us to conclude that we have to be highly skeptical."

Researcher Julie Tate contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/01/AR2005080101453.html>

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Baltimore Sun

August 2, 2005

Probe Urged Into Agencies That Detect Nuke Smuggling

WASHINGTON - Six lawmakers who oversee homeland security issues called yesterday for an investigation into whether federal agencies share research on technology for preventing nuclear materials from being smuggled into the United States.

At issue is research by at least five national laboratories that develop systems for detecting hidden nuclear materials illegally brought into the country.

The labs are funded by four federal departments - Homeland Security, Defense, State and Energy - that deploy nuclear detection systems in the United States or abroad. But lawmakers worried that poor information-sharing among the agencies could lead to duplication in the labs.

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/printedition/bal-te.nation02aug02.1.7693320.story>

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Salt Lake Tribune
August 1, 2005

Depot Completes Weapons Destruction Project

By Associated Press

TOOELE - The Deseret Chemical Depot reached a milestone Friday - incinerating the last of the deadly chemical VX and GB agents stored at the west desert facility.

The depot holds the largest chemical weapons stockpile in the United States. Under an international treaty, the U.S. must destroy all chemical weapons and nerve agents by 2012.

The facility is one of eight around the country disposing of the weapons, some of which date back to the 1940s.

In May, the Pentagon recommended closing Deseret Chemical Depot once its munitions mission is complete. That decision is still pending the approval of the Base Realignment and Closure Committee.

Depot staff estimate a final closure of the facility could come in 2012, the target date for the completing the destruction of about 125,000 mustard-gas munitions.

With Friday's milestone, about half of the GB agent in the U.S. has now been destroyed, depot public affairs specialist Alaine Southworth said.

http://www.sltrib.com/search/ci_2904554

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New York Times
August 2, 2005

Iran Says It Will Break U.N. Seals Placed At A Nuclear Plant

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, Aug. 1 - Defying the warning of European leaders, Iran said Monday that it was removing the seals placed by the United Nations nuclear agency at one of its nuclear sites to restart activities there.

European diplomats said that if Iran did go ahead and resume the nuclear activities, then they would have little choice but to ask the agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency, to place the issue before the United Nations Security Council for possible political and economic sanctions.

A senior Iranian official, Ali Aghamohammadi, said technicians were going to break the seals to the uranium ore conversion plant in Isfahan on Monday afternoon in the presence of the inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, who are currently in Iran, the IRNA news agency reported.

By the end of the day, however, it could not be determined whether Iran had actually broken the seals.

In Berlin, a German Foreign Ministry spokesman said at a news briefing that the German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, had warned that the decision was a miscalculation by Iran.

In a strongly worded statement, the British Foreign Office said that if Iran were to act on its threat and resume nuclear activities, negotiations between Iran and Europe would probably be halted.

Iran agreed nine months ago to freeze all its enrichment-related activities for as long as talks with Germany, France, Britain and the European Union continued. The United States maintains, and the European countries had come to agree, that Iran intends to make nuclear weapons. Iran maintains that its nuclear program is for peaceful energy purposes.

Mr. Aghamohammadi said Iran's decision to restart a nuclear facility was made after the European foreign ministers notified Iran in a letter that a proposal to Iran concerning incentives for it to permanently dismantle its suspected nuclear weapons program, possibly including nuclear fuel and a trade package, would be made in Paris on Aug. 30, although Iran said its deadline had been the end of July.

European diplomats said Monday that they had wanted to wait to present a proposal until after the new Iranian president is sworn in on Wednesday, and the French Foreign Ministry said in a briefing on Monday that the proposals would be presented before Sunday.

Iran says it is keeping its freeze on another, more advanced, process in the program to enrich uranium, which can lead to making nuclear fuel for power plants, or if enriched to high levels, for making nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency had urged Iran not to remove the agency's seals from any nuclear equipment at Isfahan until it dispatches more inspectors and installs additional surveillance equipment. An agency spokeswoman, Melissa Fleming, said Monday that the process could take a week to 10 days.

"We would want to account for every gram of nuclear material," she said. "We would want to be certain that no material is being diverted."

Ms. Fleming denied a statement by an Iranian government spokesman that the agency's director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, had agreed to make the inspectors and equipment available in two days. "There's been no such shortening of the time period the I.A.E.A. would need," she said.

While the agency's response to Iran was cautiously written focusing mostly on technical matters, Ms. Fleming said the agency considered Iran's voluntary suspension of uranium activities to be "essential" in its effort to solve the riddles in Iran's past nuclear activity. Suspending enrichment freezes a nuclear site, she said, and makes it easier to investigate. Monitoring the process would also use up the time of inspectors, who could focus on other elements of the nuclear program.

In Tehran, Mr. Aghamohammadi said the decision to resume work was made in a meeting by Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei; the departing president, Mohammad Khatami; the president-elect, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad; and other senior leaders.

At the conversion plant in Isfahan, the uranium ore known as yellowcake is turned into UF₆, or uranium hexafluoride gas, which can later be fed into centrifuges to be enriched.

Mr. Aghamohammadi said Monday that the UF₆ gas produced at the plant in Isfahan would be stored under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The products made of UF₆ will be given to a third country in return for yellowcake, he added.

"We will keep the suspension on enrichment and we hope we can continue our negotiations with Europe," Mr. Aghamohammadi said.

"We hope our decision would be interpreted with good will," he said, adding that the country's national pride had been hurt after its nuclear work was stopped under pressure for two years.

Mark Landler contributed reporting from Berlin for this article, and Graham Bowley from London.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/international/middleeast/02iran.html>

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New York Times

August 2, 2005

Day 7 Of Talks Yields No Progress On North Korea's Nuclear Effort

By Jim Yardley

BEIJING, Aug. 1 - Negotiators meeting Monday for the seventh consecutive day about the North Korean nuclear program reported no progress as the six participating nations struggled to draft a joint statement of principles that would push the disarmament process forward.

Christopher R. Hill, the lead American negotiator, arrived at his hotel late Monday after a day in which his delegation held private talks with the North Koreans and representatives of the other four nations.

"I wish I could report more progress, but it has been a long day without a lot of progress to report," Mr. Hill said. "I don't see any breakthrough on the immediate horizon."

Mr. Hill, who has been generally upbeat in his public appearances, seemed weary and in his most pessimistic mood to date, as reporters encircled him in the lobby of his hotel. He said "major differences" remained between North Korea and the other five nations, though he provided no specifics. He also suggested that the North Koreans had been difficult to pin down.

"There have been times when we thought some elements were resolved, only to have them pop up again," he said. The urgency of addressing North Korea's nuclear program has intensified since February, when the isolated Communist country declared itself a nuclear power. The United States wants North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program, but the two sides disagree on what sort of rewards North Korea should receive for doing so and when it should receive them. There are a host of other major issues, including North Korea's insistence that it be allowed to develop a peaceful nuclear program if it abandons nuclear weapons.

Taking part in the talks are Russia, China, the United States, South Korea, Japan and North Korea.

Over the weekend, the six nations started deliberating on a draft joint statement circulated by the host nation, China, and there was speculation that this fourth round of talks might be nearing an end. But participants are now reviewing a second draft from the Chinese, and any resolution seems far less certain.

"I can't say there was much progress," said Akitaki Saiki, the deputy chief of the Japanese delegation. "We will continue to draft."

Asked how far the six nations were from reaching an agreement, he held his hands apart a foot or so. "The difference is like this," he said.

Mr. Saiki and the other deputies have been deeply involved in the negotiations over the precise language of any joint statement. His South Korean counterpart, Cho Tae Yong, said of the talks, "Some issues have been sorted out, but many remain."

On Sunday, North Korea repeated a pledge to rejoin an international nuclear nonproliferation treaty and to permit visits by international inspectors, but only if the United States and the other participants provide security guarantees and aid and meet certain other conditions.

Mr. Hill said another day of meetings was scheduled for Tuesday.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/02/international/asia/02korea.html>

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British American Security Information Council

BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS UPDATE

28 July 2005

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Past editions of Biological Weapons Update are available at: <http://www.basicint.org/update/bwu.htm>.

Biodefense institutions strengthened in the US

On June 29 the Bush administration announced it had agreed to act on 70 of the 74 recommendations contained in the final report issued by the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the U.S. Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. The commission's recommendations include numerous initiatives on the biodefense front. Among the recommendations President Bush has endorsed: . . . (Continued at web site below.)

<http://www.basicint.org/update/BWU050728.htm>

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