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Articles & Other Documents:

[Iran Keeps Heavy-Water Reactor On Track](#)

[Seoul Nuke Stance Blindsides U.S.](#)

[Iran Rejects U.S. Warning On Nuclear Effort](#)

[S.Korea, U.S. To Discuss North's Civil Atomic Use](#)

[Anthrax Outbreak Killing Cattle](#)

[North Korea Sets Amnesty As Outside Pressures Grow](#)

[Iraqi Chemical Stash Uncovered](#)

[Tests Support Tehran On Nuclear Traces](#)

[U.S. Pursues N. Korea Nuke Talks](#)

[For Security's Sake, Old Rift With New Zealand
Overlooked By US](#)

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Miami Herald
August 13, 2005

Iran Keeps Heavy-Water Reactor On Track

Despite international opposition, Tehran said it is pushing ahead with the construction of a reactor that can produce weapons-grade plutonium.

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

KHONDAB, Iran - As the United States and Europe struggle to stop Iran's uranium development, the Iranians are pushing ahead on another track that could also lead to a nuclear bomb -- construction of a heavy-water reactor that can produce weapons-grade plutonium.

It will take at least another four years for Iran to complete the reactor, making it a less immediate worry for the West than the uranium program, parts of which are either in operation or ready to operate at a moment's notice. But ultimately, the heavy-water reactor could prove more dangerous, since bombs made with plutonium are smaller and easier to fit onto a missile.

In a comprehensive package aimed at reining in Iran's nuclear program, Europe proposed that it give up the heavy-water project in return for a light-water reactor, seen by arms control experts as easier to monitor to ensure it's not being used for weapons.

Iran -- which says its nuclear program is peaceful -- rejected the entire package this week. The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization called the offer on the heavy-water reactor a "joke."

"We have developed this capability. The heavy-water project today is a reality," Gholamreza Aghazadeh, who is also vice president, said on state-run television. "This knowledge belongs to Iran. Nobody can take it from us. As they [Europeans] see Iran's determination, they will be forced to show flexibility and accept it."

Full steam ahead

While Iran has agreed to suspend parts of its uranium program as a gesture in negotiations with Europe, it has repeatedly rejected European calls for it to also freeze the heavy-water project, which is moving full steam ahead.

"Work has not been halted there even for a day, allowing Iran to constantly advance its heavy-water project," lawmaker Rasoul Sediqi Bonabi told The Associated Press on Friday. Bonabi, himself a nuclear scientist, said Iran developed the plant itself because the world would not give Iran "a drop of heavy water."

Iran insists its nuclear program is aimed only at producing electricity, but the United States accuses it of secretly intending to build nuclear weapons. Europe is trying through negotiations to persuade Iran to give up technology that can be used for military purposes and limit its program to possessing reactors using fuel provided from abroad. The 40-megawatt heavy-water reactor could produce enough plutonium for a nuclear weapon each year, an amount experts commonly say is 8.8 pounds.

The reactor -- ringed with anti-aircraft guns as are all of Iran's nuclear facilities -- is being built at the foot of a mountain in the deserts outside the small town of Khondab, 75 kilometers northwest of the central city of Arak.

Four-year project

Building began in 2004 and is expected to be completed by 2009. Most Iranian nuclear facilities have portions built underground to protect them from airstrike -- and Aghazadeh suggested that an underground portion may be built at Khondab as well.

A plant next door began producing heavy water for the reactor last year, using water from the nearby Qara-Chai river. It produces 16 tons of heavy water a year, putting it on track to have the 90 tons needed by the time the reactor is finished.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, visited the Khondab facility in February 2003.

North Korea followed a similar two-track process in its nuclear program, which it overtly says aims to produce weapons.

Nuclear weapons can be produced using either plutonium or highly enriched uranium as the explosive core. Either substance can be produced in the process of running a reactor.

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/news/world/12373172.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

International Herald Tribune

August 13, 2005

North Korea Sets Amnesty As Outside Pressures Grow

By Choe Sang-Hun

SEOUL--North Korea announced a rare amnesty for prisoners Friday as the Communist state faced mounting international pressure to improve the human rights conditions in its gulags, where North Korean defectors have said starvation, torture and summary executions are rampant.

The move, the first of its kind in more than three years, appeared partly intended to improve the international image of the totalitarian regime while North Korea is engaged in crucial nuclear talks that could determine its long-term survival, experts said.

In a statement from the North's official press agency, KCNA, the country's Supreme People's Assembly, said it would grant "a great amnesty" to mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean Peninsula's liberation on Aug. 15, 1945, from 35 years of Japanese colonial rule.

Without elaborating on the scale of the latest amnesty, KCNA said that the government would help "ensure those who are to be set free on pardon settle down in their work." An estimated 200,000 people languish in prison camps in North Korea, according to human rights groups.

North Korea occasionally marks important national anniversaries by freeing inmates, analysts with the South Korean government said. In 2002, the North pardoned an unspecified number of people from labor camps to mark the 90th anniversary of the birth of the country's first leader, Kim Il Sung.

"They use an amnesty as an occasion to demonstrate the leader's generosity and exhort people to rally around the leader," said a North Korea analyst with the South Korean government's Unification Ministry, who spoke on the customary condition of anonymity.

"This time, however, it was also likely that the North considered the amnesty a way to mitigate international calls for improved human rights."

Six-party talks in Beijing earlier this month focused on persuading North Korea to end its nuclear weapons programs. The talks adjourned Sunday and are scheduled to resume during the week of Aug. 29.

On Friday, Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon of South Korea met his Chinese counterpart, Li Zhaoxing, in Beijing to discuss ways of ending the crisis. Ban is also scheduled to meet the U.S. secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, in Washington for similar talks.

South Korea attempted Friday to play down a rift with the United States over whether North Korea should be allowed to keep a civilian nuclear program. Washington objects to such a program.

In the six-party talks, the United States expressed a willingness to discuss normalizing ties with North Korea. The North considers ties with Washington crucial to reviving its economy through trade and cheap loans from international organizations.

But U.S. officials have said that full normalization must be preceded by improvements in North Korea's human rights record.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/08/12/news/korea.php>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Times

August 13, 2005

Pg. 1

Seoul Nuke Stance Blindsides U.S.

By Bill Sammon, The Washington Times

The Bush administration yesterday scrambled to repair a rift with South Korea that opened when Seoul proclaimed that North Korea has a right to develop nuclear energy.

"When we saw those comments, phone calls were made," said a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "We want to remain on the same page" with South Korea.

The source reaffirmed U.S. opposition to North Korea's nuclear ambitions, including the ostensibly peaceful development of nuclear-generated electricity.

But that position is now at odds with remarks made Thursday by Chung Dong-young, Seoul's unification minister and National Security Council chairman.

"Our position is that North Korea has a general right to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, such as for agriculture, hospitals and electricity generating," he told Daum Media, an on-line news site. "We have a different view to the United States."

Mr. Chung's comments, which appeared to catch the United States by surprise, were echoed later Thursday by South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon, who will visit Washington next week.

Mr. Ban said Pyongyang should be allowed to build nuclear-power plants if it rejoins the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and readmits inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), according to South Korea's Yonhap news wire.

Yesterday, South Korea emphasized that it would not give its blessing to a North Korean nuclear-energy program until Pyongyang jumps many hurdles.

"Our official stance is that North Korea would be able to engage in civilian nuclear activities if and when it gives up weapons programs, returns to the NPT and observes IAEA safeguards," Cho Tae-yong, head of the Foreign Ministry's task force on the nuclear issue, told reporters.

"There is nothing like a rift between Seoul and Washington on this issue," he added.

U.S. officials say that North Korea was caught, and admitted, secretly enriching uranium for the development of nuclear weapons in 2002.

After trading charges over uranium, North Korea went on to withdraw from the NPT, kick IAEA inspectors out of the country, restart a graphite-moderated reactor and reprocess nuclear fuel into plutonium.

The North then went on to claim it had manufactured several atomic bombs.

"They'd like to hold on to so-called 'peaceful-use' programs," Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill told CNN yesterday. "But what has to be absolutely clear is that they get out of the nuclear business, they get rid of these various programs they have -- all programs, in fact.

"And then they figure out their way how to get back into the Non-Proliferation Treaty with IAEA safeguards," he added.

Mr. Hill, Washington's chief negotiator in six-way talks aimed at denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, was not asked by CNN about Washington's rift with Seoul.

Other administration officials said they were reluctant to discuss the flap in detail because it might imperil resumption of six-nation talks later this month.

The talks deadlocked Sunday and recessed over U.S. opposition to nuclear-energy development in North Korea.

Other participants included South Korea, China, Japan and Russia.

On Tuesday, President Bush refused to budge on his opposition to nuclear-energy plants in North Korea, saying the United States had been burned before by Pyongyang.

"The North Koreans didn't tell the truth when it came to their enrichment programs," Mr. Bush told reporters at his ranch in Texas.

He added: "The South Koreans have said, 'We'll build and share power with you,' which seems to me to make good sense, so long as the North Koreans give up their nuclear weapons."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20050812-101705-9287r.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

August 14, 2005

Pg. 18

Iraqi Chemical Stash Uncovered

Post-Invasion Cache Could Have Been For Use in Weapons

By Ellen Knickmeyer, Washington Post Foreign Service

BAGHDAD, Aug. 13 -- U.S. troops raiding a warehouse in the northern city of Mosul uncovered a suspected chemical weapons factory containing 1,500 gallons of chemicals believed destined for attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces and civilians, military officials said Saturday.

Monday's early morning raid found 11 precursor agents, "some of them quite dangerous by themselves," a military spokesman, Lt. Col. Steven A. Boylan, said in Baghdad.

Combined, the chemicals would yield an agent capable of "lingering hazards" for those exposed to it, Boylan said. The likely targets would have been "coalition and Iraqi security forces, and Iraqi civilians," partly because the chemicals would be difficult to keep from spreading over a wide area, he said.

Boylan said the suspected lab was new, dating from some time after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. The Bush administration cited evidence that Saddam Hussein's government was manufacturing weapons of mass destruction as the main justification for the invasion. No such weapons or factories were found.

Military officials did not immediately identify either the precursors or the agent they could have produced. "We don't want to speculate on any possibilities until our analysis is complete," Col. Henry Franke, a nuclear, biological and chemical defense officer, was quoted as saying in a military statement.

Investigators still were trying to determine who had assembled the alleged lab and whether the expertise came from foreign insurgents or former members of Hussein's security apparatus, the military said.

"They're looking into it," Boylan said. "They've got to go through it -- there's a lot of stuff there." He added that there was no indication that U.S. forces would be ordered to carry chemical warfare gear, such as gas masks and chemical suits, as they did during the invasion and the months immediately afterward.

U.S. military photos of the alleged lab showed a bare concrete-walled room scattered with stacks of plastic containers, coiled tubing, hoses and a stand holding a large metal device that looked like a distillery. Black rubber boots lay among the gear.

The suspected chemical weapons lab was the biggest found so far in Iraq, Boylan said. A lab discovered last year in the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah contained a how-to book on chemical weapons and an unspecified amount of chemicals.

Chemical weapons are divided into the categories of "persistent" agents, which wreak damage for hours, such as blistering agents or the oily VX nerve agent, and "nonpersistent" ones, which dissipate quickly, such as chlorine gas or sarin nerve gas.

Iraqi forces under Hussein used chemical agents both on enemy forces in the 1980s war with Iran and on Iraqi Kurdish villagers in 1988. Traces of a variety of killing agents -- mustard gas and the nerve agents sarin, tabun and VX -- were detected by investigators after the 1988 attack.

No chemical weapons are known to have been used so far in Iraq's insurgency. Al Qaeda announced after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States that it was looking into acquiring biological, radiological and chemical weapons. The next year, CNN obtained and aired al Qaeda videotapes showing the killings of three dogs with what were believed to be nerve agents.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/13/AR2005081300530.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Iran Rejects U.S. Warning On Nuclear Effort

Europe Urged to Open Talks; New President Picks Cabinet Likely to Upset West

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Aug. 14 -- Iran urged European governments on Sunday to open discussions about its intention to enrich uranium and dismissed as psychological warfare a veiled Bush administration warning of possible military action against its nuclear operations.

The new Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, meanwhile, named a hard-line cabinet, a move that appeared certain to intensify Iran's confrontation with the West. None of the 21 proposed cabinet members is known to back democratic reforms. The parliament was expected to quickly approve the nominees.

The proposed foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, has criticized Iran's nuclear negotiations with the European Union and has urged the country to adopt a tougher position.

The United States has stood aside while European governments have negotiated with Iran. After prolonged talks with Britain, France and Germany, during which Iran put uranium conversion on hold, Iran this month rejected a package of aid measures, including offers of nuclear fuel in exchange for a promise to abandon plans for uranium enrichment.

Iran then restarted work at its Isfahan plant in central Iran, where uranium is converted to gas -- the last step in processing radioactive ore before it can undergo enrichment to become reactor fuel or the material for nuclear weapons.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, responded with a resolution Thursday urging the Iranians to again put the process on hold. Diplomats familiar with agency's proceedings said Iran was given a Sept. 3 deadline to halt or face possible referral to the U.N. Security Council for consideration of sanctions against its struggling economy.

Iran rejected the resolution, and on Sunday said there was nothing more to talk about on the conversion issue.

"The Isfahan issue is over," Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told state television. "What is left on the table for discussion is Natanz," where Iran has built a uranium enrichment plant.

"We definitely have plans for Natanz in the near future," Saeedi said, without offering any details.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, said Iran had not decided to begin uranium enrichment, but added: "Europe's behavior will heavily influence the decision."

While Iran says it would use enriched uranium only to power nuclear reactors for generating electricity, its past concealment of portions of its atomic program has created distrust in the West and strengthened suspicions in the United States that the material is meant for bombs.

President Bush initially had said he was heartened by Iran's hinted readiness for additional talks. But Friday, after Iran became increasingly defiant, Bush said in an interview with Israeli TV that "all options are on the table" if Iran refused to comply with international demands.

That prompted Asefi on Sunday to notch up the rhetoric, warning against any attack.

"I think Bush should know that our options are more numerous than the U.S. options," he said. "If the United States makes such a big mistake, then Iran will definitely have more choices to defend itself."

Asefi offered no specifics but characterized Bush's words as part of a psychological war against Iran.

In Washington, Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, backed Bush, saying the United States must keep open a military option.

"For us to say that the Iranians can do whatever they want to do and we won't under any circumstances exercise a military option would be for them to have a license to do whatever they want to do," McCain said on Fox television.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/14/AR2005081401014.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Tests Support Tehran On Nuclear Traces

VIENNA, Austria -- Tests by the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency appear to confirm that traces of weapons-grade uranium found in Iran came from abroad as Tehran has asserted, a diplomat said yesterday.

An analysis of Pakistani components for enrichment centrifuges identical to ones Iran bought on the black market appear to show that traces of bomb-grade uranium were the result of contamination, said a Western diplomat familiar with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"There's still some final corroboration to go on, but all the preliminary analysis does show that the particles seem to have come from Pakistan," the diplomat said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/worldscene.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

S.Korea, U.S. To Discuss North's Civil Atomic Use

By Reuters

Published: August 17, 2005

Filed at 7:10 a.m. ET

SEOUL (Reuters) - South Korea and the United States will discuss next week whether North Korea should eventually have the right to a civilian nuclear program, South Korea's foreign minister said on Wednesday. Ban Ki-moon told reporters he would travel to Washington on Saturday and meet Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on August 23. He said there was no major difference between the U.S. and South Korean view on the North's possible future use of nuclear energy.

Ban also said the United States and North Korea were expected to have contacts before the fourth round of six-country talks aimed at ending Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions is scheduled to resume later this month in Beijing. China was also expected to hold bilateral consultations with the North and the United States, he said.

"The government believes that if the North dismantles all nuclear programs, returns to the NPT and complies with IAEA safeguard measures, it will come to have trust, and in that case the door to its peaceful (nuclear) use may open," Ban said.

North Korea threw out International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors on the last day of 2002 and withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January 2003.

"I will consult closely with Secretary Rice and other senior officials during my visit to the United States on this issue and do our best to have this issue come to a sound agreement when the fourth round of the six-party talks resume," he said.

Whether North Korea should be given the right to operate a civilian nuclear program was a key stumbling block at the fourth round of nuclear talks involving the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States.

Pyongyang has said the sole purpose of operating such a program would be to generate energy.

Washington is suspicious that Pyongyang would easily convert such a plan to military use and build nuclear weapons. The North has already said it has nuclear weapons and is making more.

The talks went into a three-week recess on August 7. The six countries agreed to reconvene in the week of August 29.

Ban said there was no fundamental disagreement between Seoul and Washington on whether to allow the North to have the right to conduct peaceful nuclear activities.

"There is no disagreement that has become a problem," Ban said, adding the countries simply "have views when it comes to details."

<http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/news/news-korea-north-talks.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Times

August 18, 2005

Pg. 13

U.S. Pursues N. Korea Nuke Talks

By David R. Sands, The Washington Times

The Bush administration plans a series of intensive diplomatic contacts next week in preparation for the resumption of talks in Beijing at the end of the month on North Korea's nuclear-weapons programs, the State Department's lead negotiator for the talks said yesterday.

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill told a Washington audience he remained hopeful a statement of principles could be quickly nailed down and an agreement reached to begin removing Pyongyang's nuclear programs by October, but he cautioned the deal was far from done.

"We won't know where we stand until we get back together" to resume negotiations, Mr. Hill said.

The fourth and latest round of the six-party talks recessed Aug. 7 in Beijing after 13 days -- the longest session to date. Negotiations are scheduled to resume sometime during the week of Aug. 29. Taking part in the talks are the United States, North and South Korea, Russia, Japan and host China.

South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon arrives in Washington Saturday for talks with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior U.S. officials about the talks.

A senior Japanese delegate and perhaps a leading Chinese negotiator are also expected in Washington in preparation for the resumption of talks. Mr. Hill said he had passed word through the diplomatic contacts in New York that he was willing to discuss issues of concern directly with North Korean officials as well.

The Bush administration has demanded North Korea give up its nuclear-weapons programs.

North Korea for its part has demanded security guarantees from Washington and help in meeting its civilian energy and economic needs. It has also demanded the removal of the U.S. nuclear arsenal from the Korean Peninsula, despite U.S. denials that it has any nuclear weapons there.

Mr. Ban will be trying in part to smooth over an apparent rift between Washington and Seoul after a senior South Korean official suggested the North could eventually have a civilian nuclear-energy program if the six-party talks are successful.

Mr. Ban told reporters in Seoul yesterday that the North could only pursue the civilian program if it dismantles its other nuclear programs and rejoins the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, from which it withdrew in protest in 2002.

If Pyongyang meets all those conditions, he said, "in that case the door to its peaceful [nuclear] use may be open."

Mr. Hill yesterday said the U.S. side was focused now on eliminating North Korea's current nuclear programs.

He said Pyongyang likely could not afford a civilian nuclear program and that South Korea had already tabled a proposal to supply the bulk of its future energy needs.

This article is based in part on wire service reports.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20050817-101758-5338r.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

CBS News

Anthrax Outbreak Killing Cattle

(Page 1 of 2)

Enderlin, N.D., August 18, 2005

(AP) An anthrax outbreak has killed hundreds of cattle in parts of the Great Plains, forcing quarantines and devastating ranchers who worry how they will recover financially.

More than 300 animals in North Dakota have died from anthrax in what officials call the worst outbreak among livestock in state history. In South Dakota, at least 200 cattle have been killed. Two ranches in Texas were quarantined last month after anthrax was found in cattle, horses and deer, officials said.

Allen Lambrecht lost nine cows, or about \$9,000, along with the value of future calves.

"It got to where you didn't want to get up in the morning," said Lambrecht, whose family has farmed in North Dakota for three generations. "You would get up and go out and see what was left."

Although anthrax didn't gain public notoriety until the still-unsolved mailing attacks that left five people dead in 2001, farmers have been dealing with the disease for decades. Spores that cause anthrax can sit dormant in the ground for as long 100 years, said Charles Stoltenow, an extension veterinarian at North Dakota State University.

"It just sits there and waits for the right environmental conditions to come around," he said. "You can't predict it."

Humans are not considered at risk to catch the disease, as long as they don't come in contact with blood and tissue of an infected animal.

"You're not going to be infected unless you skin and butcher an animal that's infected," says Martin Hugh-Jones, an anthrax expert and retired Louisiana State University professor. "As long as you're not tempted to open up a carcass, you're not in danger."

Unusually wet conditions in June, along with high heat and humidity in July, likely played a factor, veterinarians said. Some areas of southeastern North Dakota had more than a foot of rain in one month.

"We've had anthrax before, but not of this magnitude," said Andrew Peterson, a veterinarian at the Enderlin Veterinary Clinic in North Dakota. "It started on July 1 and the reports have been daily since then."

The state has quarantined 85 areas, which means those producers cannot sell, butcher or transport animals.

Hugh-Jones says he expects authorities from several states and Canadian provinces to designate counties for mandatory vaccinations.

A vaccine that can prevent anthrax is available at less than \$1 a dose, Peterson said. While it's routine to vaccinate cows in the spring, when they receive other medicine, it's difficult in the summer when they are grazing in open

pastures, ranchers said.

Antibiotics, usually penicillin, can "save a cow from the edge of the grave," Hugh-Jones said. However, many animals die within hours of appearing normal.

The current outbreak has also affected bison, horses, sheep, llamas, elk and deer, said Beth Carlson, the deputy state veterinarian in North Dakota.

It's likely that any deer infected with the disease already will be dead before the bow season starts in September, Hugh-Jones said.

"We still want to make people aware of it," said Greg Link, spokesman for the state Game and Fish Department.

"People should use the same common sense they normally should. Don't shoot an animal that's sick, use precautions when opening up an animal, and cook your meat well, anyway."

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/08/18/health/main783825.shtml>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Christian Science Monitor

August 19, 2005

For Security's Sake, Old Rift With New Zealand Overlooked By US

In training to find WMD, 13-nation military exercises are under way in the waters off southeast Asia.

By Janaki Kremmer, Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA – On the face of it, it doesn't look like much: one Orion aircraft, a liaison officer, and two customs staff sent from New Zealand to participate in multinational defense force exercises aimed at capturing ships carrying weapons of mass destruction.

But Operation Deep Sabre, taking place this week off Singapore's coast, is a rare instance, where US troops will be training alongside New Zealand troops.

Since New Zealand was thrown out of the ANZUS alliance, in which the US guarantees the security of New Zealand and Australia, New Zealand has mostly been out in the cold - missing out on the technological breakthroughs and experience of the past 20 years.

The US Embassy in New Zealand has refused to comment on whether this move means a thawing of relations. The US-New Zealand divide began in 1985, when in accordance with its new antinuclear stance, the latter refused a visit from a US warship. "The US strongly supports New Zealand's participation in the PSI (proliferation security initiative) so as a result we have issued a waiver in this situation so they can participate," an embassy spokesperson said in a statement published by the New Zealand Herald.

Since 9/11, the US has increased cooperation with countries who can help in the fight against terrorism. New Zealand sent troops to Afghanistan, and for a short time helped with the reconstruction of Iraq.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark has been strongly advocating opening negotiations with the US. The new US trade representative, Robert Portman, is regarded as being more sympathetic to Wellington than his predecessor.

Experts say these changes are more step-by-step than a revolutionary shift. "I regard the continuing exclusion of New Zealand as very strange," says former New Zealand cabinet minister, Derek Quigley, a visiting fellow at the Australian National University's Defense and Strategic Institute in Canberra. While the US is happy to have New Zealand personnel in the line of fire, he adds, they are largely excluded from training with the US.

Other experts say that the significance of the 13-nation exercises in the South China Sea are being underplayed.

"Earlier cooperation was based on operations, but these are exercises where you learn testing procedures, and capabilities, and have debriefings," says Peter Cozens, director of the Center for Strategic Studies in Wellington. He adds that obdurate attitudes both in Washington and in Wellington are giving way to a new security relationship.

"Since Sept. 11, it's now all hands on the pump."

New Zealand is conscious of opportunities lost in the past two decades: The chance to be included in a free-trade deal with the US, currently being negotiated with Australia, as well as the loss of a direct voice at the ANZUS council table. "We are now dependent on Australia for all our defense ties, while Australia has the complete running of the region when it sits down with the US in defense talks," Mr. Quigley says.

However, New Zealand's status might have played to its advantage in relations with China. Some China watchers in New Zealand believe this small South Pacific country may beat Australia to signing a free-trade deal with Beijing.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2005/0819/p07s02-woap.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)