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New York Times
January 20, 2004
Pg. 1

Bush To Portray Libya As An Example

By David E. Sanger and Neil MacFarquhar

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 — Two years after President Bush described Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil" — perhaps the signature phrase of his presidency — his foreign policy aides contend that his uncompromising language and willingness to use military force have changed the behavior of potential enemies.

But that change has come at a cost, government officials from Asia to the Islamic world say, as resistance to Mr. Bush's calls for reform and democratization has hardened in some places.

Mr. Bush plans to return to the theme of reform in his State of the Union address on Tuesday, his aides say, though he will not repeat the phrase that prompted an outcry from his critics and allies alike.

Iraq, with its long record of defying the United Nations, was the first to absorb the Bush administration's wrath. But the decision to invade Iraq 14 months after the president's speech changed the diplomatic landscape.

With Iran and North Korea, the administration has so far pursued diplomacy, and administration officials acknowledge that military force would be far riskier to use against either country.

In the State of the Union speech, which is to begin at 9 p.m. Eastern time, Mr. Bush will urge countries to follow the example of Libya, which recently announced that it would dismantle its nascent nuclear weapons program, a step the administration attributes to Mr. Bush's confrontational stance toward nations seeking chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.

Administration officials say Iran, Sudan and to some extent Syria appear to be doing what they can to avoid confrontation with the United States.

Iran's reluctant agreement to let international inspectors explore nuclear facilities kept secret for 18 years seems at least partly driven by the fear of attack. Syria has embraced a pragmatic approach, and its border with Iraq is no longer viewed as a passage for militants seeking to attack American forces in Iraq.

North Korea remains the stubborn outlier. Last week, its foreign minister boasted to a delegation of visiting Americans that the more time Mr. Bush spent trying to build pressure on the country to disarm, the more time North Korea had to add to its nuclear arsenal.

The C.I.A. believes that North Korea has done exactly that, producing the fuel for two or three more bombs while Mr. Bush was focused on Iraq.

Across the Islamic world, reformists from Iran to Egypt say Mr. Bush's words and style have made it easier for their opponents to tar them as lackeys of Washington.

On issues from political reform to rewriting school curriculums, those pushing for democracy or expanded rights for women find themselves facing vociferous accusations that they are pursuing an American agenda, or American dictums.

Administration officials respond that over time Mr. Bush's pressure will aid those reform movements, not hurt them. "I cannot see how being truthful about the nature of regimes is harmful to those who want to change those regimes," Condoleezza Rice, Mr. Bush's national security adviser, said in an interview from Camp David, where she was editing the last drafts of the State of the Union speech that the president will deliver on Tuesday.

"When Ronald Reagan spoke out against the Soviet Union," she said, "it stimulated those inside, who saw they had friends around the world, and they were able to speak out. It will be easier, not harder, for democratic forces to prevail."

Ms. Rice is among the most passionate advocates of the position that Mr. Bush changed the landscape when he uttered the phrase two years ago, though she and others say it will not appear in this year's speech. It was not repeated in last year's State of the Union address either.

She insisted that despite the criticism directed at Mr. Bush after the speech two years ago — that there was no axis, and that Mr. Bush hurt America's cause by labeling certain states as outlaws — the approach had been vindicated.

"It really challenged the international community to get serious about this class of states pursuing weapons of mass destruction," she said.

Ms. Rice cited Mr. Bush's Proliferation Security Initiative, in which a dozen or so countries have begun to intercept suspected weapons shipments, as an example of how the White House had motivated allies to act.

A senior defense official said: "What he did was get the whole world's attention. It's had an effect beyond the three nations, and whether that was accidental or calculated, in retrospect I think it was a smart thing to do."

Whether it was smart or not, Muslim scholars and officials have acknowledged in interviews that Mr. Bush fundamentally altered the way the United States dealt with the Islamic world once he spoke in such stark terms.

"It changed the status quo in the region for the first time since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran," says Abdul Rahman al-Rashed, a Saudi columnist and former editor of the pan-Arab daily Al Sharq al Awsat published in London.

"Did Bush scare people?" Mr. Rashed said. "In my opinion, yes, he did scare every single regime. Was that positive? It shows some positive elements, except in the street: it was perceived in the street as arrogance."

The administration and its supporters say the evidence that Mr. Bush's combination of stark language and willingness to use force had the greatest effect on countries like Syria, which has softened its tone and heeded warnings to patrol its border with Iraq.

But when Secretary of State Colin L. Powell suggested Friday that Syria should follow Libya's example and give up its unconventional weapons, the country's state-run news organizations shot back that Israel should first give up its nuclear program.

Around the same time as the Iraq invasion, Iran began to concede that it had been secretly working to enrich uranium, though it denied that it was planning to use the material for an atomic bomb.

Reluctantly, it allowed international inspectors into the country and turned over documents detailing 18 years of surreptitious activities. It signed an accord allowing more intrusive inspections, all steps that Saddam Hussein refused to take.

Ms. Rice and others see a direct connection between Iran's new tone and Mr. Bush's approach, even while noting that the United States has pursued a far less confrontational strategy with Iran and North Korea than it did with Iraq. Yet even reformist members of Iran's Parliament like Ali Shakourirad said the administration overstated its own influence.

"Bush's 'axis of evil' speech did not have much effect on our policies," he said in a recent interview, "except it made efforts for the détente policy with the U.S. worse." Mr. Shakourirad argued that pressure from the far more soft-spoken Europeans and the International Atomic Energy Agency had more to do with Iran's decisions. "The pressure from the U.S. was not that effective," he said.

In Libya, the country's mercurial leader, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, apparently worried about sharing Mr. Hussein's fate, began negotiations with the United States and Britain to destroy his own unconventional weapons the week before the Iraq war began. He did not make concessions, though, until a ship full of centrifuge parts headed for its ports was intercepted in October.

"Libya came to the United States and Great Britain to do it," Ms. Rice argued. "That said something about who was enforcing the world's demands."

But a longtime Republican adviser to Mr. Bush suggested last week that the impact of Mr. Bush's speech and subsequent actions was "dramatically overblown," and that Colonel Qaddafi had begun moving to end his isolation several years ago, when he turned over suspects in the Lockerbie airplane bombing case.

Whatever the source of the concessions, the example of force used against Iraq has become part of the public mindset.

Western diplomats report that at a recent soccer match involving Saadi el-Qaddafi, Colonel Qaddafi's soccer-playing son, fans from the opposing side chanted "Saadi, Saadi, son of the ruler, your fate will be the fate of Uday." The phrase — it rhymes in Arabic — refers to one of the sons of Mr. Hussein who was killed in an American raid.

On the Democratic campaign trail in Iowa and New Hampshire, Mr. Bush's "axis of evil" speech is often cited as an example of how he needlessly alienated other nations.

"I think it was one of the braggadocio moments for the administration that invites scorn and ridicule," Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts said in a recent interview in New Hampshire. "I was surprised that he would base a foreign policy on it."

In fact, by all accounts it began as a speechwriter's turn of phrase, meant to signal that the president planned to deal with far more than just Al Qaeda in a post-Sept. 11 world. Two people close to the White House said Andrew H. Card, the White House chief of staff, had raised the question of whether its inclusion would so overwhelm news coverage of the 2002 State of the Union address that it would drown out the rest of the president's message.

"No one seemed that concerned," one official reported. But Mr. Bush has not repeated the wording in more than a year.

Perhaps the reason, some American and Arab officials say, is that Mr. Bush has come to see that there has been far less progress than he hoped in encouraging wider adoption of democracy in the Islamic world by promoting the examples of emerging movements in Afghanistan and Iraq.

That initiative, which Mr. Bush touched on in his 2002 address and amplified last fall, is often viewed with suspicion, if not downright hostility.

Syrians bridle at the idea that the Americans can teach others about democracy, making the argument, often heard throughout the Arab world, that civil rights have eroded in the United States itself since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But they concede that they have no choice but to try to work with the Bush administration.

In an interview in late November, Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, insisted that the critical issue was whether the United States was using its power to act as a force for stability in the region or whether its attitude was promoting instability.

"The issue here is whether the United States has a vision to solve problems in Iraq, in the region, in the Middle East, or whether the United States doesn't have that vision," he said. "I hope we can make better steps toward democracy in our country, but that takes time."

"No one in Syria, or maybe in the region if I want to exaggerate a little bit, asks for help from any country to have his own democracy." He added later that most Arabs now believed that the Iraq example, even if it had rid the Middle East of a leader whom many feared, was "a bad example of bringing democracy."

In the Tuesday night speech, Mr. Bush has the opportunity, officials say, to move the debate beyond the "axis of evil" phraseology. In the Middle East, Iraq has faded from the headlines somewhat. But the public zeal to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute has not, and even those pursuing the kind of reform agenda Mr. Bush would applaud say American pressure has been counterproductive.

"We are not yielding to the American threat," said Aziz Shukri, the dean of the school of international relations at the University of Kalamoon, one of Syria's new private universities, its creation an innovation in a country where the state has dominated every institution.

"The whole world is witnessing a new era of American hegemony, American dominance," he said, "so we have to coexist with it. It doesn't mean we like it."

David E. Sanger reported from Washington for this article and Neil MacFarquhar from Cairo.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/20/international/middleeast/20AXIS.html>

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Washington Times

January 20, 2004

Pg. 13

'Hero' Suspected In Nuke Transfer

Pakistan questions senior aides

By Anwar Iqbal, United Press International

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Abdul Qadeer Khan, the man revered as a national hero as the father of Pakistan's atomic bomb, might have been involved in the transfer of nuclear-weapons technology to Iran, Pakistani authorities say.

Yesterday, officials in Islamabad confirmed that they had detained some of Mr. Khan's senior aides for questioning. "So far, our investigations indicate that only one man is behind this alleged transfer. It is wrong to blame an entire nation for the mistakes of an individual," a senior Pakistani official told United Press International after the detentions.

Without naming Mr. Khan, the official said, "We gave him the status of a national hero when he did something for the country, but now if he makes a mistake, he will have to pay for his mistake as well."

Mr. Khan and some of his associates already have been questioned about suspected involvement in selling bomb-making know-how to Iran.

Pakistan denies detaining its nuclear scientists for questioning, but says several have been "debriefed."

Masud Khan, a spokesman for the Pakistan Foreign Office, who is not related to the scientist, said it was wrong to "presume" that those being debriefed were guilty.

"Some of them could also be cleared," he said.

The investigations, he said, were being conducted under Pakistani laws and "those who have not violated these should have no fears whatsoever."

Pakistan has been investigating the export of nuclear technology and equipment to Iran since early last month, when U.S. news organizations first reported the proliferation.

Quoting officials at the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, several U.S. newspapers reported that Iran clandestinely had received centrifuges and other nuclear know-how from its Islamic neighbor Pakistan.

Tehran has acknowledged having centrifuge designs similar to those used in Pakistan but denied receiving them from Islamabad.

Pakistan denied the government in Islamabad might have been involved in the transfer, but said some scientists might have handed over nuclear equipment to Iran "out of personal ambition or greed."

Those detained yesterday included Islam-ul Haq, a retired major of the Pakistan army who has been Mr. Khan's senior aide since at least May 1998 when Pakistan exploded nuclear devices after similar tests by arch rival India.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20040119-091832-7195r.htm>

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New York Times

January 20, 2004

American And British Weapons Experts Return To Libya

By Patrick E. Tyler

LONDON, Jan. 19 — British and American weapons experts have returned to Libya and within weeks could begin dismantling, destroying and removing technology and materials related to Libya's once secret programs to develop nuclear and other illicit weapons, a senior Bush administration official said Monday.

The experts spent several weeks in the fall inspecting Libyan laboratories and military factories but had taken no steps to begin dismantling the weapons programs after Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi announced on Dec. 19 that he would give them up.

Plans are also being laid by Libyan chemical weapons scientists to incinerate tons of mustard gas agent manufactured to fill chemical bombs, the senior administration official said in a telephone interview. Missile programs and biological research efforts are still under scrutiny.

The United States and Britain have not decided how to remove any highly enriched uranium and the centrifuge machines designed to separate it from natural uranium in the manufacture of the first Libyan nuclear bomb. That project was in its early stages when Colonel Qaddafi said he was dropping the arms programs. The senior administration official said the illicit materials would probably be shipped to a secure facility in Britain or the United States.

In Vienna, American and British officials met Monday with Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, and reached an agreement under which the United Nations agency will verify the destruction and removal work, a spokesman for the agency said.

However, the work of destroying or dispatching illicit weapons will not be performed by inspectors from the international body, as it was in Iraq, Western officials familiar with the talks on Monday said. Instead, it will be performed by American and British experts from intelligence agencies, the United States Department of Energy and the national nuclear laboratories.

Dr. ElBaradei met with John R. Bolton, the American undersecretary of state for arms control, and William Ehrman, a senior British disarmament official. After the meeting, they met with reporters, but did not make reference to the American and British team that has already arrived in the Libyan capital, Tripoli, Western officials said. The head of the team, numbering about a dozen experts, was identified by Western officials as Donald A. Mahley, the State Department's special negotiator for chemical and biological arms control issues.

Dr. ElBaradei said his agency's role was "very clear — that we need to do the verification.

"A good part of the program needs to be eliminated," he said. "It needs to be moved out, and we clearly need the British and American support with logistics."

For his part, Mr. Bolton, speaking in Vienna, said it was a "very productive meeting," though Western officials said significant tensions still existed between some American officials and Dr. ElBaradei.

A spokesman for Dr. ElBaradei said the director would send nuclear inspectors to Libya later this week to work with the American and British team. The international agency will tag and seal the machines, technology and dangerous materials so they can be placed in an inventory for destruction or removal.

The senior administration official said Libya was "in a hurry" to dismantle the weapons programs and was eager to make a full and detailed declaration about its once secret nuclear program to the board of governors of the atomic agency in March.

Those critical declarations, along with the dismantling and destruction of weapons and technology, will hasten the day when Libya looks to President Bush to lift sanctions and restore diplomatic relations with Tripoli. All are essential steps in the return of American oil companies.

American officials are contemplating opening an office in Tripoli to facilitate the work of the weapons experts, one Western official said, but also to create a channel for direct diplomatic contact between Libyan and American officials.

Also on Monday, the senior administration official said the deadline of the Lockerbie settlement that hangs over the Libyan disarmament process could be extended by mutual consent if Congress has not acted to lift sanctions by May.

Libya agreed to pay \$10 million to the families of each of the victims of Pan Am Flight 103, brought down by a Libyan terrorist operation over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. But the final \$6 million in payments depends on a decision by President Bush to persuade Congress to lift sanctions on Libya and to remove Libya from the list of terrorist-supporting states.

The official said that if all the disarmament tasks were not completed by May and if Congress had not acted, but it appeared that both would occur, Libya would probably extend the period of payment.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/20/international/europe/20LIBY.html?pagewanted=all>

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Los Angeles Times
January 20, 2004

Dutch Confirm Possible Spread Of Arms Secrets

Nuclear technology developed by European consortium apparently made its way to Libya, Iran and North Korea, perhaps via Pakistan.

By Douglas Frantz, Times Staff Writer

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Two government ministers in the Netherlands acknowledged Monday that highly sensitive nuclear technology developed by a Dutch company may have been transferred to Libya and North Korea along with Iran and Pakistan.

The disclosure in the Dutch parliament marked the first public confirmation of assertions that centrifuge technology for enriching uranium apparently found its way to Libya and North Korea. It was already known that Pakistan and Iran had the technology.

The Dutch officials said it was not clear how the potentially arms-related technology may have been transferred. But diplomats elsewhere said the public comments were likely to increase pressure on Pakistan, which has already been linked to Iran's capability and is suspected of providing the technology to North Korea and Libya.

U.S. officials have long suspected that Abdul Qadeer Khan, who led the development of Pakistan's atomic bomb, stole the centrifuge secrets in the 1970s while working for the Dutch company Urenco. He was convicted of the theft, but the verdict was overturned.

Urenco is a British-Dutch-German consortium, and officials said it has not been implicated in the spread of the centrifuge technology.

A Urenco spokesman told the Reuters news agency that the company did not do business with Iran, Libya or North Korea and that the technology may have been passed to those countries by means outside its control.

Centrifuges are used to process uranium into fuel for reactors or fissile material for bombs. Most experts regard obtaining fissile material as the most difficult step in building an atomic bomb.

Evidence of Pakistan's possible role in transferring centrifuge technology emerged last summer when inspectors from the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency uncovered an extensive enrichment program in Iran based on Urenco's designs.

After several inspections and protracted negotiations with the agency, Iran conceded in November that it had received centrifuge drawings and components from several middlemen, including Pakistanis, according to diplomats.

Pakistan drew suspicion again last month after Libya announced that it was abandoning its development of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and opened its doors to inspectors from the United States, Britain and the IAEA.

Diplomats said in recent interviews that IAEA inspectors had been shown two types of centrifuge equipment in Libya. They said the equipment was clearly based on the designs of the Dutch unit of Urenco and its German affiliate.

The designs appeared to have come from Pakistan, although other sources may have helped. The Libyan centrifuge program, the diplomats said, was in its early stages.

Centrifuge cylinders similar to those developed and manufactured by Urenco were visible in photographs taken inside one of the Libyan warehouses and shown to The Times.

American officials have said that Pakistani authorities traded centrifuge enrichment technology to North Korea for missiles and missile technology in the late 1990s.

Little is known about the extent of Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program, which is an alternative to its production of weapons material from plutonium.

Pakistani authorities have denied transferring nuclear technology to Libya. They also have said that any transfers to North Korea stopped before Gen. Pervez Musharraf came to power in a military coup in October 1999.

But Pakistani officials have conceded that people who were trying to make money might have sold nuclear technology to Iran in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Pakistani intelligence officials have questioned several senior scientists, including Khan, about Iran's possession of the technology. Several people remain in custody, including Khan's personal secretary, Islam ul Haq.

In the Netherlands, Foreign Minister Bernard Bot and Economic Affairs Minister Laurens-Jan Brinkhorst said in written replies to questions from a member of parliament that they were uncertain how the Urenco technology may have reached other countries.

"There are indications now that, in addition to [Iran and Pakistan], North Korea and Libya also possess this type of technology," they said. "The IAEA and AIVD [Dutch intelligence] are still investigating this."

Even if Pakistani scientists acted without government knowledge, the transfers of such sensitive technology would raise serious concerns about the effectiveness of Pakistan's controls over its nuclear facilities, diplomats said.

"Some countries have developed their technology without the system to control it," said a European diplomat.

"Pakistan does not have clean hands if it doesn't have control over its individuals."

Times wire services contributed to this report.

Washington Times

January 19, 2004

Pg. 19

Devaluing Arab WMDs

Iraq, Iran, Libya... who's next?

By George Perkovich and Avner Cohen

The Bush and Blair administrations have made enormous strides in either forcing or persuading these major Middle Eastern states to step toward abandoning nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. Whether or not Iraq actually possessed these weapons, Washington and London's determination to remove doubts made other regional leaders question the cost-benefit trade-off in their own weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

To thwart the WMD programs of all three countries is already an impressive achievement. Other Arab power centers in the region — Syria, Saudi Arabia and Egypt — are all carefully watching this dramatic reversal. It has the potential to trigger new regional dynamics that would devalue WMD. These dynamics are not the result of a fruitful process of multilateral arms control, like the one that started and stalled in the 1990s, but are largely a reaction to American hegemony.

But implementing Libya's disarmament decision and persuading Iran's factious government to permanently abandon nuclear weapon production capabilities requires more than coercion. Both countries will want a phased process of reciprocal inducements, leading to a removal of U.S. and international economic sanctions. No less important, Iran, along with Libya and other Arab states, also wants fairness. These states and their populations have repeatedly invoked with disdain the double standard by which Israel's possession of nuclear, chemical and perhaps biological weapons is tolerated.

Israel's leadership and media have recognized this, to their credit, even if Washington officials and think tanks still shy from acknowledging it. Since Libya and the United States and Britain announced the agreement to roll back Libya's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons capabilities, Israelis have begun to debate how their government can contribute to the process. The Israel Defense Forces chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, in what some noted as veiled rebuke of governmental silence, referred publicly to the Libyan move as "serious, very serious." He noted that this could be part of a "domino effect" following the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and that combined with Iran's agreement last month to accept additional nuclear inspections, it had created the beginnings of a changed regional landscape and lowered the strategic threats facing Israel.

Indeed, over the New Year, the Israeli inner cabinet was convened by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to review these developments and to consider whether and how Israel should contribute to the dynamics. While there is a national consensus in Israel that the nuclear issue is non-negotiable at the present time — prior to comprehensive regional peace — there are voices in Israel, in and out of government, saying that the nation should join the process of banning WMD in a meaningful way.

Israel possesses nuclear weapons, not for prestige or offensive purposes, but solely to deter against threats to its existence. Yet, over the long-term, Israel's arsenal of taboo weapons will prompt its adversaries to seek countervailing capabilities that could test the durability of deterrence. Strategically, Israel would be better off in a region where no one possessed any weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, Israeli leaders have acknowledged this by endorsing annually at the United Nations, for the last two decades, the idea of making the Middle East a zone free of all WMD. Israel insists, however, that peace should precede disarmament.

The surprise Libyan disarmament announcement, following the removal of Saddam Hussein and the cornering of Iran's nuclear program, creates a unique opportunity to augment momentum toward the distant goal of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. Elimination of Syria's large arsenal of chemical and biological weapons should be the next target of the Bush administration. Syria is actively seeking better relations with the United States, but unlike Libya, Syria would not do it unilaterally. Israel would have to be part of the deal.

Israel signed, but has not ratified, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention. Israel has never signed the largely symbolic 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, nor did it ever explain the reasons behind its abstinence. It is time for Israel to show its good will by explicitly joining the ban over these two categories of WMD. On the nuclear issue, not to be forgotten, Israel should also find a way to engage more actively with the nonproliferation regime, even though it is clear that it cannot sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty itself.

Much more remains to be done in a campaign that ultimately will be measured in decades rather than years. But each of the steps along the process will be eased if Arab and Iranian societies see that Israel too acknowledges that its own arsenal is part of the problem.

The United States, as chief cop on the block and Israel's main protector, also must demonstrate fairness. The Iranian and Arab polities crave fairness as they perceive it has been denied to them. Their perceptions may be debatable, and Israel's existential security cannot be traded away, but some Israeli contribution to regional disarmament is imperative.

George Perkovich is author of "India's Nuclear Bomb" and vice president for studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Avner Cohen is author of "Israel and the Bomb" and senior research fellow at the University of Maryland.

<http://www.washtimes.com/op-ed/20040118-103507-3601r.htm>

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Washington Post
January 21, 2004
Pg. 23

Scientist Discusses N. Korean Motives

Hecker Toured Nuclear Plant

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

North Korea invited an unofficial delegation of Americans to tour its nuclear facility at Yongbyon earlier this month as a way of providing confirmation that it has reprocessed spent fuel rods into plutonium, said Siegfried S. Hecker, a former director of Los Alamos Nuclear Laboratory who was part of the delegation.

Hecker said in an interview that, "for the most part, it looked like the U.S. and perhaps many other countries didn't believe" the North Koreans had taken 8,000 rods -- which the country had previously agreed not to reprocess -- and turned them into a material necessary for producing a nuclear weapon.

"What I surmise is they were looking for a way to get some independent confirmation they have actually done this," Hecker said. "That's their motivation."

Hecker, a metallurgist, testified in a closed session before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday and will make a public statement before the committee today. Administration officials who have been briefed on the visit said the North Koreans displayed what they described as reprocessed plutonium.

Charles L. Pritchard, a former State Department official who also was part of the delegation, told a forum at the Brookings Institution last week that the cooling pond that had previously held the rods was empty during the visit. The delegation was led by John W. Lewis, a Stanford University scholar who has made 10 trips to North Korea since 1987. His previous trip there was in August, shortly after North Korea participated in six-nation talks designed to resolve the crisis over Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions.

The North Koreans told Lewis in August that they wanted him to come back before the next round of talks, Hecker said. When Lewis received word that he might be allowed to visit Yongbyon -- closed to outsiders since North Korea ousted United Nations inspectors a year ago -- he invited Hecker to join the delegation.

The first round of talks ended inconclusively. China, the host of the talks, has been trying to arrange another meeting, perhaps for next month, but nothing has been scheduled yet. Other participants include the United States, South Korea, Japan and Russia.

Hecker said North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan told the delegation their visit was designed to break the stalemate and lead to "opening up a bright future." He told the visitors that "we will not play games with you," saying the primary reason for the invitation "is to ensure transparency," Hecker said. Kim invited the delegation "to take an objective look at Yongbyon, and we'll leave the conclusion to you."

Kim added that "he felt this visit could have great symbolic significance," Hecker said.

Hecker, who visited the closed nuclear cities of Russia 12 years ago, said he had his own motivation for making the trip. He said that "there has been all this ambiguity associated with the North Korean program," except from the period from 1992 -- when Pyongyang first invited the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit -- to 2002, when the 1994 agreement that had frozen the nuclear program was terminated. In particular, he said, it is unclear how much plutonium the North Koreans have made and what they have done with it.

"Ambiguity leads to miscalculations," Hecker said. "And in the nuclear business, miscalculations can be disastrous. If my presence can in any way help clear up this ambiguity, my feeling was that would be good for the United States, and it would also be good for North Korea. I viewed it to be a win-win situation."

Hecker said scientists have a significant role to play in global security, helping to facilitate diplomatic solutions "by bringing clarity to these issues." Any future agreement with North Korea, he noted, will need to be implemented and verified. "Diplomats don't do that," he said. "You need scientists to implement it. Once you implement, you have to verify it, and once again, it is the scientists who verify it."

Hecker added: "There is natural common bond among scientists. The common bond is one of mutual respect. Sometimes you can develop trust out of mutual respect -- but not always."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A33247-2004Jan20.html>

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New York Times
January 21, 2004

American Group Says North Koreans Are Eager To Deal With West

By Christopher Marquis

WASHINGTON, Jan. 20 — The leader of an unofficial American delegation that visited North Korea this month said Tuesday that North Korea seemed anxious to resolve differences with the United States over its nuclear program.

North Korean officials told the delegation that the Bush administration's central concern, complete and verifiable dismantlement of their nuclear weapons program, was within reach, said John W. Lewis, the group's leader, in a telephone interview.

He spoke a day before another member of the group, Siegfried Hecker, a former director of Los Alamos Laboratory in New Mexico, is scheduled to tell the Senate of his conclusions about the state of the nuclear complex in Yongbyon that was the focus of the group's visit.

Dr. Lewis, a professor emeritus of Chinese politics at Stanford, is the founder of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford, which seeks to influence policy by engaging foreign officials and citizens on a second track, independent of the United States government. In this case, he led a delegation of civilian experts to North Korea, in advance of a delayed second round of six-nation talks to try to defuse the threat that North Korea might be building nuclear weapons.

Dr. Lewis declined to speak about what he had seen at the complex, but he said North Korea clearly hoped to present a more reasonable and friendly face to the West, including to the United States. On this visit to North Korea, his 10th since 1987, Dr. Lewis said he had seen evidence of real change in North Korea.

One sign, he said, was a bustling market several blocks long in Pyongyang that was divided into hundreds of privately run stalls, many of them full of meat and vegetables for sale. The visitors were told that the farmers were allowed to sell their goods after meeting production quotas.

In addition, Dr. Lewis said he and his colleagues had noticed brisk traffic in the capital and the use of cellular phones and the Internet. And they noted the availability of cable television in their hotel rooms.

North Korea has been in the iron grip of dictatorship for decades, with total government control of all aspects of daily life. It also imposes some of the tightest restrictions on foreigners anywhere; many visitors report seeing only what the government wants them to see.

Earlier this month, North Korea offered to suspend its nuclear weapons program in anticipation of further negotiations. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell welcomed the move as "a positive step," though it is far from the "complete, irreversible and verifiable" dismantling of the project sought by the administration in the six-nation talks.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/21/politics/21DELE.html>

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London Daily Telegraph
January 21, 2004
Pg. 1

West Says Iran Has Broken Nuclear Pledge

By Anton La Guardia, Diplomatic Editor

Senior western diplomats accused Iran yesterday of breaking a promise to halt uranium enrichment, a key process in making a nuclear weapon.

The Iranian undertaking, given three months ago, was hailed at the time as marking a new approach to the disarmament of rogue states through diplomacy rather than war but western officials said Teheran was still buying and assembling machines to enrich uranium. "The Iranians are definitely still out procuring equipment," said one senior western source.

"This is clearly a breach. The goal is cessation of enrichment and we are moving in the opposite direction."

Iran says it has only "temporarily" suspended operation of the gas centrifuges to enrich uranium and insists it has a right to make fuel for nuclear reactors to generate electricity.

However its behaviour will deepen suspicion in America and Europe that Teheran's civil nuclear programme is being used to mask a secret project to build an atomic bomb.

The latest disclosure could undermine the fragile agreement negotiated in October by Britain, France and Germany to avert a new crisis over weapons of mass destruction.

Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, met his German and French counterparts on Monday to discuss Iran and other issues.

Diplomats said the United States was certain to raise the enrichment issue when the governing board of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog meets in March.

This carries the implied threat to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

"If the Iranians want to go to the Security Council, they are going about it the right way," said one diplomat. "We are in the middle of a negotiation. Like all negotiations with Iran, it's hard work. You have to do a lot to get a little."

Under concerted pressure from America and Europe, Teheran admitted in November to lying about its nuclear programme for 18 years, confirmed it had made small quantities of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium and agreed to a new system of intrusive inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran also promised to suspend "all uranium enrichment-related activities" as part of the deal that saved Iran from being referred to the Security Council and being treated as an international pariah.

However, the issue is now mired in a legalistic argument over what constitutes "enrichment activities". Diplomats said the Iranians had adopted a very narrow definition: halting the operation of gas centrifuges while continuing to build up their facilities.

However the Americans and Europeans believe Iran should stop building the machines or even importing the components. The Europeans' aim is to convince Iran to abandon uranium enrichment in exchange for guaranteed supplies of nuclear fuel from Russia or western Europe.

Iran's move in November was seen as a major diplomatic breakthrough, and a tangible success for the war in neighbouring Iraq.

But Iran's co-operation now looks half-hearted after Libya's dramatic announcement last month that it was ridding itself of all weapons of mass destruction.

American and British weapons experts, overseen by the CIA and MI6, arrived in Tripoli at the weekend to dismantle the weapons programmes and aim to complete the job "in weeks or months". Much now depends on Mohammed ElBaradei, the head of the international atomic agency.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2004%2F01%2F21%2Fwiran21.xml>

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New York Times

January 21, 2004

Pakistan Bars Its Nuclear Scientists From Traveling Abroad

By Salman Masood and David Rohde

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Jan. 20 — Pakistan on Tuesday barred all scientists working on its nuclear weapons program from leaving the country, as the government intensified its inquiry into allegations that nuclear technology had been shared with Iran.

At the same time, a senior intelligence official said a former army commander had approved the transfer of technology to Iran.

The official said the scientist who had led the effort to build an atomic bomb, Abdul Qadeer Khan, had told investigators that any sharing of nuclear technology with Iran had the approval of Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg, the commander of Pakistan's army from 1988 to 1991. The official said aides to Dr. Khan had told investigators the same thing.

It is not known if investigators have questioned General Beg, who is retired. While army chief, General Beg publicly advocated a strategic partnership between Iran and Pakistan. But in an interview in November, the general said he had not approved the transfer of nuclear technology to Iran or any other country.

"I was privy to the nuclear policy," he said. "There was a policy of nuclear restraint."

American officials say they believe that Pakistan has shared nuclear technology with Iran, North Korea and Libya. Pakistani officials have said that no technology was given to Libya, that no technology is currently going to North Korea and that the allegations about Iran are being aggressively investigated.

They have said that individuals may have leaked technology to Iran in the late 1980's and early 1990's, but that the government never authorized such a move.

In a speech to Parliament on Saturday, President Pervez Musharraf, a general who seized power in a coup in 1999, said Pakistan had to prove to the international community that it was a responsible nuclear power.

Within hours, eight former and current officials were taken into custody for questioning, government officials said. Three scientists had already been detained for questioning in November and December.

The aggressiveness of the inquiry has provoked protests across the political spectrum and accusations that the Musharraf government is reacting to pressure from Washington.

On Monday an alliance of hard-line Islamic parties, the Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal, or United Action Front, announced that it would begin nationwide street demonstrations.

Qazi Hussain Ahmad, the acting head of the religious alliance, which holds the third-largest number of seats in Parliament, called the inquiry the "worst kind of victimization of national heroes to please the Bush administration."

Secular, pro-Western political parties and analysts, as well as the families of the scientists, also criticized the government, saying scientists lauded as national heroes weeks ago were now being humiliated. They said senior army and government officials were scapegoating scientists to increase their own credibility with Western leaders. Khwaja Asif, a member of Parliament for the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), a secular party, said it was doubtful that individuals could secretly transfer technology without the military knowing.

Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan Khan, a military spokesman, called the new travel restriction a security precaution. "Until the time investigations are completed," he said, "the government has to ensure that the scientists are present here." Government officials said eight current and former officials in the nuclear program, including two retired brigadiers, a retired major and at least three scientists, were undergoing voluntary questioning and were able to contact their families. They emphasized that no one had been accused of wrongdoing so far.

Families of the officials give an entirely different account. They put the number of people being questioned at 20 to 25. They also said those being held were forcibly detained and had not contacted their families while in custody. Two of three scientists known to have been detained in December have been allowed to return to their families, relatives said. Most of the others have not contacted their families, including one scientist taken into custody at the end of November, the families say.

All of the officials being questioned appear to have been employed at the Khan Research Laboratories, the country's main nuclear weapons development facility in Kahuta. All are believed to be close aides to Dr. Khan, who is himself being questioned.

Saima Adil, the eldest daughter of Dr. Nazir Ahmed, a chief engineer at the Kahuta labs, said 8 to 10 unidentified men surrounded the family's house on Saturday evening.

"They took our father away," she said, "and till now we don't have no idea about his whereabouts or his condition.

"Such a treatment is tantamount to terrorizing those scientists who have given their lives to serve their country."

Salman Masood reported from Islamabad for this article and David Rohde from New Delhi.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/21/international/asia/21STAN.html>

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Insight Magazine

February 3, 2004

FDA Fails To Halt Anthrax Anxiety

By Timothy W. Maier

For thousands of Gulf War veterans the holiday season was a roller-coaster ride. Many celebrated when a federal judge ruled in late December that the anthrax vaccine was experimental if used to protect against inhaled anthrax instead of anthrax poisoning by skin contact. The ruling immediately put a halt to the military's anthrax-vaccination program in which more than 1 million troops already have been inoculated since 1998. But eight days later, on Dec. 30, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) dropped a bombshell that in effect reversed the court ruling by declaring the anthrax shot was safe and effective against anthrax delivered by aerosol spray.

In 1972 the FDA gained jurisdiction over vaccines and related products from the National Institutes of Health. In 1985 the FDA proposed the anthrax vaccine and some others as safe and effective against bacterial infections but never completely certified those conclusions. The recent finding, eight days after the court ruling on anthrax vaccination of U.S. troops, was said to be part of a process to certify proposals and findings since the FDA took jurisdiction more than 30 years ago. The official explanation for the timing is that the anthrax attacks of 2001 pushed the FDA to finish the job and issue a final rule based on a review by an expert panel.

In any case, the FDA released its final ruling with a prepared statement that clearly indicated a bureaucratic reaction to the decision of the federal court. "A recent ruling by a United States District Court for the District of Columbia gave the opinion that the anthrax vaccine should be classified as 'investigational' with regard to protecting against inhalation anthrax," the FDA stated. "Today's final rule and order make it clear that FDA does not regard the

approved anthrax vaccine as 'investigational' for protection against inhalation anthrax." So that no one missed the point the FDA also declared that this ruling should be noted in any further litigation.

"This will end all lawsuits," claims D. Jacques Smith, an attorney for Michigan-based BioPort Corp., the sole supplier of the anthrax vaccine. "We always believed that the vaccine had a very low risk. The risks are equal to the flu vaccine that I received last month" [see "Flu Secrets You Should Know," p. 18]. Except for one slight detail: Coroners do not cite the flu vaccine itself as the cause of death, while the anthrax and smallpox vaccines given to U.S. military troops have been listed as the cause of death for at least a half-dozen veterans, according to civilian medical examiners. Pentagon doctors in turn dispute those conclusions.

The immediate approval of the anthrax vaccine set off a firestorm of criticism among veterans who believe they are being subjected to unnecessary risk. One veteran put it this way: "The ruling is decades overdue and rife with problems, including relying on animal data to fill the legal void created due to the lack of valid human data. A full vetting of the facts is required in order to hold Department of Defense [DoD] and FDA officials accountable for their abuses of power and discretion." That full vetting is not likely to happen.

Congress disappeared from the debate shortly after Capitol Hill offices were struck by the anthrax mailings in 2001, and it now appears unlikely that there will be hearings about these problems, especially in light of the recent FDA final ruling.

Immediately seizing on the FDA's decision, the Justice Department requested that U.S. District Judge Emmet G. Sullivan set aside his preliminary ban and proceed with the class-action lawsuit against the Pentagon by six "John Doe" plaintiffs seeking to stop the vaccination program. Sullivan, who had ruled that U.S. soldiers should not be used as "guinea pigs" for experimental drugs, since has backpedaled in light of the FDA's finding. While his ban was in line with findings of experimentation by congressional reports from both the House and Senate, the FDA's ruling left him no choice. He lifted the ban on Jan. 7, but not before he called the FDA ruling "highly suspicious," following as it did so closely upon the heels of his injunction.

"Only after the issuance of an injunction, up pops a federal rule," Sullivan declared with acid sarcasm to Justice Department attorney Shannen Coffin, who is representing the Pentagon in the lawsuit filed by the six John Does. "And you're telling me it's coincidental?"

"I'd stand on a stack of Bibles and tell you it's coincidental," Coffin replied to Sullivan.

"That's an amazing coincidence," Sullivan shot back.

The FDA claims its final ruling was made prior to Sullivan's holding even though it was not made public until after the ban was implemented. Nonetheless, Sullivan's ban prevented several thousand troops from receiving the inoculation before being sent out to high-risk areas to fight the war on terrorism. Coffin argued that every day the injunction was in place meant that 1,000 additional troops could face harm for being unprotected from anthrax. Sullivan's ban also prompted an angry response from Assistant Secretary of Defense William Winkenwerder, who called it bad medicine. "It challenges the conclusions of America's best medical experts," he told reporters at his weekly briefing in late December. Winkenwerder stressed "paramount concern" for the safety of the troops and noted from the evidence of anthrax attacks in the United States that "it doesn't take a Scud missile to kill with anthrax. All it takes is an envelope."

Indeed, said Winkenwerder, "The safety and the effectiveness of the anthrax-immunization program is based upon the best science in the world. In March 2002, the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine concluded in an exhaustive 250-page report - right here - that the anthrax vaccine is, and I quote from this report, 'an effective vaccine for the protection of humans against anthrax, including inhalation anthrax, caused by all known or plausible engineered strains of bacillus anthracis' - that's the medical term for anthrax. The department fully supports this scientific finding and those of the FDA that the anthrax vaccine is safe and effective against all forms of anthrax." Critics shrugged that FDA bureaucrats had been brought in to rescue the military, to offset claims that U.S. troops were being used as guinea pigs.

While the Pentagon appears to have won the first round, Mark Zaid, who is representing the six anonymous plaintiffs, says he is not about to quit. The scrappy attorney says the ruling "is nothing more than after-the-fact gamesmanship to overrule the court's findings. It appears to be reflective of policy duress rather than independent analysis."

The central issue is whether the anthrax vaccine is licensed for inhalation anthrax, Zaid says. In hindsight, the plaintiff attorney says the Pentagon might have avoided the entire controversy by claiming that the vaccine was to protect troops in case they came into contact with anthrax through the skin, because no one disputes it was licensed for that situation. "If they had taken that posture from day one they could have gotten away with it," Zaid says, although he believes there are legitimate health-risk issues even in that case which have not been fully addressed. Zaid now plans to argue against the FDA's ruling that the vaccine is safe and will challenge the manner in which the Pentagon may have violated the process by giving the vaccines to some troops out of sequence. The FDA requires

that a six-shot regime must be followed in a specific order and completed in a specific time frame for the vaccine to work effectively.

Since 9/11 there no longer are hundreds of veterans publicly speaking out against the vaccine, but there remain pockets of resistance, primarily among reservists who believe adverse reactions to the vaccine may affect their civilian employment. These critics point to Sept. 20, 1996, when the manufacturer submitted a request for an investigational new drug application (IND 6847) to the FDA for new labeling of the vaccine, which would indicate use for inhalation anthrax. Shortly afterward on Oct. 15, 1996, the Army placed an ad in the Washington Post to recruit subjects for experimental research related to the manufacturer's requested IND. An angry FDA fired back a letter to the chairman of the Army's Human Use Committee at Fort Detrick, Md., objecting to the request and advertisement.

Reservists believe the Pentagon's decision to try to change the labeling in 1996 proved one thing. "The DoD knew its use of the anthrax vaccine was experimental," charges a reservist who asked not to be identified. "The FDA also knew. Both agencies are circling the wagons, protecting themselves, rather than correcting the wrongs inflicted on thousands of soldiers. The dilemma is an ethics case study of failures to self-regulate and act in the best interests of our citizens and soldiers."

While the manufacturer never got its new label, BioPort now can, says FDA spokeswoman Lenore Gelb. However, she says, that may not be necessary because the previous label says the vaccine protects regardless of the route of anthrax exposure. The FDA approved the vaccine in 1970 both for inhalation anthrax and skin contact, she insists. The FDA's position is that the vaccine was never investigational, except when it was used on postal workers. Gelb explains the vaccine is considered investigational with postal employees because it was used only after they were exposed to anthrax. She also claims that neither the Pentagon nor the White House applied pressure on the FDA to issue its final ruling after the judge dropped the hammer on the Pentagon for using experimental drugs on U.S. troops. "It's something that has been in the process for some time," she says.

Critics, meanwhile, point to a jump in adverse reactions to the vaccine that increased from .2 percent to somewhere between 5 percent and 35 percent. Col. John Grabenstein, deputy director of the anthrax-immunization program, downplayed those statistics, claiming most of these reactions reflect a change in collection method. The reactions are minor, he says, ranging from headaches to swelling at the injection site. "If you asked - if you went looking for the side-effect data on flu shots, you'd be getting something in the range of 5 to 35 percent. These are not scary numbers," he insists.

"Tell it to Rachael Lacy!" says a member of the armed forces who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation. She is the U.S. Army sergeant who died last year because of complications from the vaccine, according to an autopsy report from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. Six others also died mysteriously after rolling up their sleeves to receive the anthrax and smallpox shots. But the Pentagon and the FDA dismissed these and related claims, declaring that the vaccine has a 92 percent rate of effectiveness. Even so, some studies suggest the vaccine does not work against all strains. And while the Pentagon has remained steadfast in its claim of safety it quietly has told veterans to be careful what they say about the vaccine. The fear of such intimidation has many worried veterans telling Insight that they no longer report what they believe to be vaccine-related illnesses. What also may become alarming is a wave of pneumonia cases that some believe are related to the shots. Already, at least 17 have died as a result of complications from pneumonia [see "Mystery Deaths Fuel Vaccine Anxieties," Sept. 30-Oct. 13, 2003]. The recent FDA finding also appears to be a direct shot at the ongoing lawsuit filed by six John Does who argue that the anthrax vaccination was an illegal experiment because, they claim, it was investigational for inhaled anthrax and therefore banned. In 1991, after many Gulf War I veterans returned home with mysterious illnesses, Congress passed legislation forbidding the Pentagon from using troops as guinea pigs.

If the anthrax vaccine was the cause of Gulf War Syndrome it certainly would not be the first time the military served up troops for experiments. The government failed to warn troops in World War II about the potential long-term dangers of mustard gas, and the same was true of atomic radiation during the Cold War and Agent Orange in Vietnam. This experience, combined with the latest outbreak of pneumonia that appears to be related to the anthrax vaccine, has created uneasiness among military personnel. About 500 active-duty troops have refused to take the vaccine after a series of reports on deaths and illnesses came to light. The Pentagon has court-martialed about 200 of these troops. In addition another 500 pilots and flight-crew members have quit or transferred from the Air National Guard or Reserves, according to plaintiffs' lawyers, troops and base sources.

But Winkenwerder insists the storm has passed. Since 9/11, he boasts, only 10 troops have refused the vaccinations, while 600,000 to 700,000 rolled up their sleeves and did as they were told. "So, contrary to what I think has already appeared in the press about several hundred service members refusing, that was prior to Sept. 11, in the period of 1998 and 1999," Winkenwerder says. "Our experience the last two years is that our service members support the vaccine program and accept it."

Not everyone is accepting Winkenwerder's view. "The DoD's conscious mandate of anthrax vaccine for an unapproved use is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg, an ethical dilemma looming beneath the surface," charges a high-ranking veteran. "Illegal manufacturing changes before the first Gulf War increased the potency up to a hundredfold, adulterating the vaccine. DoD failed to study the vaccine in general or the illegal changes made to the vaccine as a possible cause of Gulf War illness."

The FDA does admit it is continuing to study long-term health risks associated with the anthrax shot. The results of that study have yet to be completed. This alone makes some wonder why the study was not completed prior to troops being subjected to the vaccine. They will have to wait to find out if there are long-term problems. But by then, some worry, it might be too late.

Timothy W. Maier is a writer for Insight.

<http://www.insightmag.com/news/2004/02/03/Features/Fda-Fails.To.Halt.Anthrax.Anxiety-582257.shtml>

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Washington Post

January 22, 2004

Pg. 1

N. Korean Evidence Called Uncertain

Scientist Describes Nuclear Plant Tour

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

The North Korean engineers put a red metal box on the table and opened it. They pulled out a white box made of wood that fit snugly in it. They slid off the top and pulled out two clear jars, which looked as if they had once held marmalade. The lids were sealed tight with tape.

Siegfried S. Hecker, a former director of Los Alamos National Laboratory, peered at the jars from several feet away. One contained a greenish powder, the other an oddly shaped piece of metal. It looked a bit like a funnel, 1 1/2 inches high and an eighth of an inch thick.

Hecker focused on the metal. This, the North Koreans proudly proclaimed, was their "deterrent" -- plutonium that had been recently created and shaped from the waste of nuclear fuel rods that until a year ago had been under the careful watch of United Nations inspectors.

The jars and boxes were whisked away. Wait a minute, Hecker said. "It looks like plutonium, but there is no way I can be sure it is plutonium," he said. "I want to hold the jar." The red box reappeared.

North Korea's willingness to show off its Yongbyon nuclear facility -- and eagerness to show it can produce plutonium -- was intended to demonstrate Pyongyang is serious about breaking the stalemate with Washington over its nuclear programs, members of an unofficial U.S. delegation say. But the delegation's observations have alarmed U.S. officials because the trip two weeks ago appears to confirm that North Korea has processed all 8,000 spent fuel rods -- giving them enough weapons-grade plutonium for as many as half a dozen nuclear weapons.

U.S. intelligence had been divided on this question, with the State Department's intelligence arm in particular arguing it was unclear whether the rods had been reprocessed.

Hecker, in a two-hour interview and in testimony yesterday before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he cannot say conclusively that the metal displayed was recently reprocessed plutonium, in part because he did not have the necessary equipment. Moreover, the North Koreans did not provide evidence to the visitors the plutonium had been placed in a nuclear device. But the delegation also saw a small reactor operating, apparently smoothly, producing enough plutonium for an additional bomb a year.

At one point, Hecker said, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan noted that Libya and Iraq were proved not to have nuclear weapons. Then he bragged to his visitors, "But we have weapons of mass destruction."

The following account is based on the interview with Hecker and supplemented by interviews with other delegation members:

The delegation was led by Stanford University scholar John W. Lewis, and its members were the first Westerners to visit the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center since U.N. inspectors were ousted more than a year ago. The group arrived Jan. 8 at 10:30 a.m., after a two-hour drive, sometimes over an unpaved road, from Pyongyang.

It spent nearly eight hours there, viewing the small 5-megawatt reactor, the cooling pond that once held the rods and the facility for reprocessing. They also drove past the crumbling facade of a much larger, 50-megawatt reactor, where construction had been halted 10 years ago under an agreement with the Clinton administration.

After an introductory meeting at a guest house, the group toured the small reactor. It saw a steam plume emanating from the cooling tower in the morning and the afternoon, and all indications from the control room suggested the reactor was operating smoothly.

The North Koreans said the reactor began operating last February to provide heat for the nearby town, replacing shipments of fuel oil that had been suspended by the Bush administration in late 2002 when the nuclear crisis began. Hecker, a metallurgist with top-secret clearances, noted to his hosts that the uranium fuel rods in the core of the reactor were also generating up to six kilograms of plutonium a year.

The delegation then visited the cooling pond for spent fuel, next to the reactor. At great expense, the United States had provided 400 stainless-steel canisters to store the 8,000 rods in a deep pool of water -- and the canisters had been sealed to prevent tampering.

The group dressed in protective gear -- smocks, booties and skullcaps -- and looked into the pool. The seals and locking plates were gone. There was a thin layer of ice on the pool. A number of canisters were open.

"Okay," one of their North Korean hosts said. "You have that answer."

"Wait a minute," Hecker objected. "There were a whole bunch of canisters that were closed, so I can't go back home and say they are all gone."

The North Koreans suggested he select one at random and they would open it up. Hecker picked one that was seven rows down and four over, and then four men operated a crane to bring it up and unscrew the top. It should have held 20 rods. Using a light, Hecker confirmed it was empty.

Finally, the delegation was taken to the reprocessing facility, where the plutonium that has built up in the rods is separated. The delegation peeked through the heavily shielded windows where the separation is done, but no one was at work. The North Koreans said they had completed reprocessing the rods at the end of June.

"Okay," one North Korean official said. "We have demonstrated our deterrent."

Hecker again objected, saying that he had seen nothing to prove processing had taken place and that the rods could be anywhere. That's when the North Korean brought out the red box with the two jars. One jar held what appeared to be plutonium oxalate powder -- which could be turned into plutonium. The other jar held the metal piece.

"This is a scrap piece from a casting from our recent campaign," one official said.

"What's the density?" Hecker asked.

"Between 15 and 16."

Hecker raised his eyebrows, since plutonium has a normal density of about 19.8 grams per square centimeter. This meant the North Koreans had produced an alloy, making the notoriously brittle metal easier to manipulate.

When Hecker asked what element was added to the plutonium, the North Korean shot back: "I'm not authorized to tell you that, but you know. It's the same thing you use."

Hecker, using plastic gloves, wanted to hold the jar to conduct two simple tests -- to see how heavy it was and whether it was warm. Plutonium is twice as dense as iron and is slightly warm to the touch because of its radioactivity. Hecker said it felt heavy and, in the frigid air of the facility, the jar wasn't cold. But it also wasn't hot. When Hecker noted to a North Korean official that it wasn't very warm, he replied, "That's because the '240' content is low."

This also was potentially important. Plutonium-240 is one of the two main isotopes, or chemical types, of plutonium used in weapons. Plutonium-240 is more radioactive than the other isotope, plutonium-239, and it accounts for most of the heat given off by the metal. Reactor plutonium has as much as 40 percent plutonium-240; weapons-grade plutonium, by contrast, has less than 6 percent of plutonium-240.

When Hecker asked to have his hands checked for radiation, the North Koreans brought in a Geiger counter. The red box was still in the room, and it set off the device when it was turned on. "This stuff was radioactive," Hecker said. The day after the Yongbyon visit, a senior North Korean official, Li Gun, approached Hecker and declared, "We've shown our deterrence."

Hecker was blunt. "No, you didn't show us your deterrence," he said. A nuclear deterrent, he told Li, has three elements: weapons-grade plutonium, a nuclear device and a delivery system for the weapon.

"Let me make sure we understand each other," Hecker said. "You showed me nothing -- no facilities. You had me talk to no people that give me any indication as to whether you have the ability to go from plutonium metal to a nuclear device. I saw nothing."

"Well, you saw the capability of our people," Li replied. "Didn't that convince you that we know how to build a nuclear device?"

Hecker said what he saw required reactive physics and chemical engineering. The next steps take more physics and metallurgy, knowledge of high explosives and testing, and much more.

"Look, this is just like somebody in an automobile company telling me that just because they've got steel, they know how to build an automobile," Hecker told Li. "It's the same thing."

A disappointed Li said he would try to find someone to speak to Hecker who could prove North Korea has that ability. But in the evening Li came back and said they had run out of time.

Staff writer Joby Warrick contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A36874-2004Jan21.html>

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Washington Post
January 22, 2004
Pg. 26

Hunt For Iraqi Weapons May Get New Chief Soon

By Walter Pincus and Mike Allen, Washington Post Staff Writers

Charles A. Duelfer, an experienced former U.N. weapons inspector, is likely to be named soon to succeed David Kay as head of the U.S. hunt for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, a senior administration official said last night. Duelfer, 51, who has expressed doubts that such weapons will ever be found, is widely respected in the arms-control field and has personal relationships with many of the Iraqi scientists who were involved in Iraq's weapons programs. In making the case for war, President Bush and his aides repeatedly warned of the consequences to the United States if Saddam Hussein were to use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. The failure of the military to find any such weapons in eight months of searching has damaged U.S. credibility in some foreign capitals.

White House officials say they are eager to continue the search. Vice President Cheney told National Public Radio yesterday that it will "take some additional, considerable period of time in order to look in all the cubbyholes and the ammo dumps and all the places in Iraq where you might expect to find something like that."

Kay told administration officials last month that he planned to leave in February, before a final report is issued.

Officials said last night that he is still likely to appear on Capitol Hill to provide the briefings he has promised to lawmakers.

Duelfer, who was chosen by CIA Director George J. Tenet, will head the 1,400-member Iraq Survey Group, which is slated to submit its final report this fall.

NBC News first reported last night that Duelfer was likely to replace Kay.

Duelfer told NBC in an interview aired Jan. 9: "I think it's pretty clear right now that they're not going to find existing weapons in Iraq of either a biological or chemical nature."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A37126-2004Jan21.html>

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(Editor's Note: Hyperlink for 4-page press statement and purchase information for referenced report follows article.)

Washington Post
January 22, 2004
Pg. 18

Report Cites Potential Of N. Korean Arsenal

By Glenn Frankel, Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, Jan. 21 -- North Korea's nuclear arsenal could reach four to eight bombs over the next year and increase by up to 13 additional bombs per year by the end of the decade, according to a detailed assessment released Wednesday by a prominent research group here.

The report by the International Institute for Strategic Studies warns that time is running out on diplomatic efforts to halt the Pyongyang government's nuclear program while it remains relatively small.

"What we're saying is, in the near-term immediate future, North Korea's ability to increase its nuclear arsenal is very limited," said Gary Samore, a weapons expert and the report's principal author, who was senior director for nonproliferation and export controls at the National Security Council during the Clinton administration.

"But as you go beyond that window," he added in a news briefing here, "it really begins to get into the range of dozens of nuclear weapons."

The institute's 120-page report cautioned that it was impossible to know for certain how many nuclear bombs, if any, North Korea currently possessed. But based upon previous assessments and the assumption that the country's nuclear weapons would use a simple, implosion-type fission device, the study said it was "plausible" that North Korea had already acquired enough plutonium to build one or two bombs before it suspended its nuclear program in the early 1990s.

After North Korea ousted international inspectors and announced a resumption of its nuclear activities in 2002, the report said, the country's ability to manufacture more nuclear weapons depended on whether Korean officials were truthful in their claims that they had reprocessed nearly 8,000 spent fuel rods from one of two reactors. The report estimated the fuel rods could provide 25 to 30 kilograms of plutonium -- enough to build two to five nuclear bombs.

At present, the report stated, North Korea's capability to produce fresh plutonium is limited to its functioning 5-megawatt reactor, which it restarted in February 2002. The reactor could produce enough plutonium for one new bomb per year, according to the report.

But completion of a second, 50-megawatt reactor now under construction could produce 55 kilograms of plutonium each year, according to the study, and a new centrifuge enrichment plant could add another 75 kilograms of highly enriched uranium. Together, these substances could provide the material for another eight to 13 bombs per year.

The "worst-case scenario" was that these weapons would be available "around mid-decade," while a more cautious assessment would put them out of reach until the second half of the decade, the report estimated.

Samore said North Korea had developed missiles that could reach South Korea or Japan, but probably not the United States.

The United States has been trying to persuade North Korea to scrap its nuclear program, although the Bush administration and its diplomatic partners in China, Russia, Japan and South Korea are divided over the extent of the program and over whether incentives or economic and political pressure might work best. Samore said recent successes in bringing Iran and Libya's nuclear development programs back within international inspection regimes would have little impact in North Korea, whose leaders see nuclear weapons as a key to their survival at a time when the country is slipping further into economic deprivation.

The report said that the North Korea's military forces had degraded to the point where they would be hard-pressed to launch a conventional strike against South Korea. But Samore warned they were strong enough to make any invasion by U.S. forces "a very unattractive option."

Samore said, "the costs and the casualties and the risks would be extremely high," but added that the threat of military force was still important in compelling Pyongyang to the bargaining table.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35664-2004Jan21.html>

P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

NORTH KOREA'S WEAPONS PROGRAMMES

A NET ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

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Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily

January 22, 2004

Qadhafi 'Rear Guard' Action Attempts To Halt US Discovery Of WMD Link With Iraq

Exclusive. Analysis. By Gregory R. Copley, Editor, GIS (Global Information System). With input from GIS Station Tripoli.

Very senior Libyan sources have confirmed that embattled Libyan leader Mu'ammarr al-Qadhafi was attempting to circumvent the possibility that US intelligence officials would discover the linkages between Libya and Iraq on the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by his aggressive program to publicly "abandon" Libya's WMD programs.

The sources said that his December 19, 2003, announcement about abandoning Libyan WMD programs — about which he had consistently lied for more than a decade — were designed to protect the "core secret", the longstanding Libyan cooperation programs with Iraq, Iran, the DPRK and even Egypt, on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and strategic missile development. By openly admitting the WMD programs and then abandoning them, the sources said, he hoped to avert deeper investigation. In this regard, he was helped considerably by the readiness of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Mohamed al-Baradei and UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw to accept his comments at face value, rather than to ask why he had made the decision to change, after consistently lying for so long, and after a massive expenditure of Libyan resources.

Qadhafi had consistently denied any Libyan involvement in WMD programs and had disavowed links to international terrorism. However, on December 19, 2003, Qadhafi suddenly confirmed the existence of these programs and said that Libya would now abandon them. His decision followed a statement by US Under-Secretary of State John Bolton, threatening Iran, North Korea (DPRK), Syria, Libya and Cuba with "adverse consequences" if they persisted with their WMD programs.

GIS/Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily has consistently noted the ongoing nature of the Libyan WMD programs and the Libyan partnership with the Iraqi Government of former Pres. Saddam Hussein on these projects. See, among other reports, the Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily report of October 1, 2002, entitled Weapons Grade Uranium Moving in Middle East; Iraqi WMD and Delivery Development Being Undertaken in Libya. This Service also highlighted the direct involvement of the Libyan External Security Organization (ESO) in producing the disinformation — in the form of a forged dossier — provided through the Italian military intelligence service, SISMI, to the US, attempting to obfuscate the movement of uranium from Niger to the Iraqi WMD program being conducted inside Libya.

See Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily report of July 29, 2003: Niger-Iraq Uranium Reports Involve Ongoing Libyan Deception Ops.

Family sources close to Qadhafi said that the ailing leader — now in the advanced stages of terminal cancer — had become convinced that the US had targeted him for attack, and particularly because the US had now come closer to understanding the true nature of the Libya-Iraq WMD links which had matured following the 1991 US-led Gulf War against Iraq. The attempt to obfuscate the movement of uranium from Niger into the joint Libya-Iraq WMD programs had included the ESO preparation of the forged dossier, which became the basis of statements made by US Pres. George W. Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address.

However, the Libyan sources said that Qadhafi remained concerned that deeper investigation by the US would reveal the fact that the Niger uranium had, in fact, gone to Libya, for use by both Libya and Iraq. As a result, on December 29, 2003, Libyan officials, ostensibly engaged in both security and immigration, met in Niamey, the Niger capital, with their Niger counterparts and began two days of consultations, allegedly on security including illegal immigration, drug trafficking, proliferation of small arms and ammunition, as well as robberies. However, it was understood that the "routine" nature of the talks masked the real intent of the Libyan officials, which was to ensure that there would be no leaks from Niamey about the uranium exports to Libya.

Meanwhile, on January 19, 2004, five scientists associated with Pakistan's premier nuclear facility A. Q. Khan Research Laboratories (KRL), including its Director-General, Mansoor Ahmad, were arrested for allegedly leaking nuclear secrets to "foreign countries". Among those held were Major Muhammad Islam (retd.), a close aide of KRL founder Abdul Qadeer Khan, considered the architect of Pakistan's nuclear program. There had been reports that Abdul Qadeer Khan might himself be questioned or arrested by investigators probing the leakage of Pakistan's nuclear secrets to countries such as Iran and Libya. In fact, Pakistani sources said that Dr Khan had long been sidelined from nuclear research because of questions about his loyalties. Reports surfaced in late 2003, however, noting his cooperation in a private capacity with Iran on the development of nuclear weapons for that country. 1 And although there is no known links on nuclear weapons between Iran and Libya on nuclear weapons development — indeed, the Libya-Iraq link on warhead development was in some senses a potential threat to Iran because of Iran-Iraq rivalries — there was cooperation between Iran and Libya on delivery systems.

See Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, September 4, 2003: Libya, Iran, DPRK Discuss New Strategic Missile Procurement, in which it was noted:

"[S]ources confirmed that, since late August 2003, the Libyan Government had been involved in serious negotiations with Iran about the procurement of an unspecified number of Shahab-3 road-mobile intermediate-

range ballistic missiles (IRBMs). Significantly, North Korean (DPRK) officials played a key rôle in promoting and facilitating the negotiations, largely because of the extent of DPRK involvement in the missile program."

"The sources said that Libya sought a promise from Tehran to build a Shahab-3 development site in Libya to allow the subsequent autonomous production of the Shahab-3 following the initial purchase. While no deal had been concluded by September 3, 2003, and it appeared that such an agreement was still far off, GIS sources believed that there existed a real possibility that this exchange would eventually be finalized."

US officials were quoted in January 2004 as saying that Libya had obtained centrifuge design technology from Pakistan and experts suggested that many of the parts had been manufactured in Malaysia. Centrifuges can be used for enriching uranium used in nuclear reactors or weapons. And, on December 30, 2003, 150 Pakistanis were sent back to Pakistan from Libya through a special charter flight. While there are understood to be about 700 Pakistanis in Libyan prisons, it has been clear that the Libyan Government had recruited a wide range of Pakistani specialists to come to Libya. Much of this was reportedly managed by Qadhafi's heir and son, Saif al-Islam. Concern over the private recruitment of Pakistani scientists and specialists by Libya for WMD programs, missile development and terrorist activities is not misplaced.

Meanwhile, on January 17, 2004, UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw was accused — as outlined in an article in The Daily Telegraph of January 18, 2004 — of a "diplomatic cover-up" over Col. Qadhafi after refusing to answer questions about the seizure of uranium-enrichment equipment bound for Libya in October 2003. The capture by the US of thousands of centrifuges on board a German-owned vessel en route to Libya had raised suspicions that Qadhafi had offered to abandon his weapons program only after threats from the US, rather than the lengthy UK and US diplomacy claimed by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Indeed, the entire "avalanche" of Western support for Qadhafi's decision to admit to the WMD programs and to agree to their disbandment has completely taken the edge off US attempts to unveil the full extent of the Libya-Iraq-DPRK (and Egyptian) WMD cooperation, as Qadhafi had intended. In this regard, there have been many US and European policymakers, anxious for a "victory", who have been prepared to buy the Qadhafi position, as stated.

At the end of December 2003, UN IAEA chief Mohamed el-Baradei met Qadhafi and praised him for cooperating with teams conducting the first-ever inspections of Libya's nuclear weapons program, noting: "Libya has shown a good deal of cooperation, a good deal of openness. ... This is a country that appears fully committed to cooperating."

It should be noted, however, that el-Baradei was a key element of Libya's planned program to introduce, and then unveil, the disinformation which made its way into the January 2003 Bush State of the Union address. It was el-Baradei who claimed — without any intelligence capability to support his allegation — that the papers used by Pres. Bush were forged. It is clear that he only knew that fact because he was told by the Qadhafi Administration.

There is, therefore, a questionable historical relationship between Qadhafi and el-Baradei, not to mention el-Baradei's known antipathy toward having the US control the disarmament programs of either Iraq or Libya. As well, el-Baradei is Egyptian, and the involvement of Egypt in the Libya-Iraq missile programs has not been insignificant.

GIS noted, on September 4, 2003, and earlier, "Iraqi-Libyan WMD cooperation at a site near the Egyptian border called al-Kufra [aka al-Kafra] and the presence of some 20,000 Iraqi technicians and scientists in Libya to help with these efforts".

Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily of November 8, 2000, reported:

"The Libyan acquisition of NoDong-1 SSMs is the result of a joint Egyptian-Iraqi-Libyan crash program to overcome delays in production of indigenous SSMs. Initially, the Egyptians and the Iraqis wanted to expedite the production of their own missile in Libya. Cairo arranged for Tripoli to provide cover for the revival of the Bad'r/Condor program which could no longer take place in Iraq and now also not in Egypt because of the exposure by the US of the North Korean (DPRK) rôle and a consequent US pressure to stop the program. Therefore, the Libyans initiated their relations with the DPRK on behalf of Cairo and Baghdad."

Meanwhile, a report from Vienna on January 20, 2004, based on IAEA sources indicated that "Teams from the United Nations, the United States and Britain are secretly setting up bases in Libya for the purpose of scrapping Tripoli's weapons of mass destruction". The wire service report said that diplomats had said on condition of anonymity that US and British weapons experts — including specialists on nuclear, chemical and biological weapons — began arriving "this past weekend" [ie: January 17-18, 2004]. They also said that members of a separate team from the International Atomic Energy Agency were gathering in Tripoli.

One of the principal drivers in the current process was the fact that the leaderships of most European states and the US wanted to see a "victory", and a Libyan renunciation of WMD and therefore a foreseeable end to a major weapons threat in a potential Arab-Israeli dispute was removed. As a result, even when the European and US players viewed the Qadhafi move cynically, there was no pressure to "open a can of worms" by digging into Qadhafi's motivation, or the linkages with Egyptian, Iranian, DPRK and Iraqi WMD programs. As a result, however, this meant that the linkages to Syria — a major conduit in Libyan dealings with Iraq during the 2003 War, and with Iran

— remained uninvestigated. It also encouraged the Iranian clerical leadership, and Egyptian Pres. Hosni Mubarak, to embrace the view that they had not been detected in their WMD programs.

Significantly, neither US Under-Secretary of State Bolton nor the Bush White House have yet signed off on the Qadhafi ploy. On January 20, 2004, it was announced that six US Congressmen would travel to Tripoli on January 24-25, 2004, to meet Qadhafi, and probably visit facilities where his Government claimed it had begun programs to make WMDs. The trip would be the first by elected US officials to Libya in almost four decades. Rep. Curt Weldon (Republican, Pennsylvania), who would lead the bipartisan congressional delegation said the Libya trip was born out of a recent dinner meeting in London with Qadhafi's son, Saif al-Islam, whom he had met through a contact from Ukraine. The initiative validated earlier GIS reports as to Saif al-Islam's central rôle in the current strategic moves by Libya. However, the White House gave only a tepid endorsement of the trip of the Congressmen, noting that it would not prevent lawmakers from visiting Libya but would not provide military aircraft to fly them into Tripoli. On balance, however, Qadhafi and Saif al-Islam had recovered from the collapse of the 2002-2003 program to normalize Libya's position by attempting to settle the PA103 terrorist bombing case, with a settlement to families of the victims of that incident. However, the latest Qadhafi ploy was at the expense of billions of dollars of investment in missile and WMD programs over the past decade. Significantly, the collapse of the Saddam Administration in Iraq, and the ongoing pressure on Iran's clerics, along with the failure of the Ba'athist/Libyan attempt to overthrow the Mauritanian Government on June 8, 2003, meant that the massive WMD and missile programs in Libya were unlikely to proceed much further, anyway.

One Libyan source said: "Qadhafi has handed Bush and Blair an easy victory in order to deny them a more meaningful victory."

Footnote:

1. Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily of October 22, 2003, noted: "Prince Sultan's visit to Pakistan was followed by a visit to Saudi Arabia in mid-September 2000 by a Pakistani strategic policy and nuclear delegation led by Dr Abdul Qadir Khan, Dr Ijaz Shafi Ghilani and Dr M. Younus But. They were guests of Prince Sultan, and at a speech on about September 20, 2000, Dr Abdul Qadir Khan thanked the Saudi Government for contributing to the success of the Pakistani nuclear weapons tests on May 28, 1998. That indicated a Saudi involvement in the Pakistani nuclear weapons program much earlier than Pakistani officials have generally acknowledged. [Saudi financial support for Pakistani nuclear research was, however, assumed even during the Zia ul-Haq era of the 1980s, but without any known understanding of a direct quid pro quo for Saudi Arabia.]"

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U.N.: Iran Not Reneging on Nuke Promise

Thu, Jan 22, 2004

By PAUL GEITNER, Associated Press Writer

DAVOS, Switzerland - The head of the U.N. atomic agency on Thursday rejected suggestions that Iran may be reneging on its promise to fully suspend uranium enrichment — a process that can be used to make nuclear weapons.

Tehran announced it had suspended uranium enrichment late last year as it sought to blunt concern it was running a secret weapons program and to deflect U.S. attempts to gain U.N. Security Council involvement.

Western diplomats and nuclear experts told The Associated Press this week that even key European nations that negotiated the deal with Tehran have started to question its commitment. They said Iran appears to be using semantics — the meaning of the word "suspend" — to keep some of its nuclear enrichment program operational.

But International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei said Thursday the U.N. agency had seen no indications Iran had reneged on its promise. He spoke on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum ([news - web sites](#)).

"I see no reason why Iran should backtrack on its pledges," ElBaradei said, adding that U.N. inspectors were working in Iran this week. "Obviously it would have serious implications if they do not cooperate fully with us ... I hope and I am confident they will continue to cooperate."

President Bush ([news - web sites](#)) on Tuesday reiterated demands that Iran "meet its commitments and not develop nuclear weapons."

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami ([news - web sites](#)) told reporters in Davos Wednesday that "we are not doing anything wrong."

Asked about reports that North Korea ([news - web sites](#)) had supplied Iran with nuclear weapons technology, he said, "I categorically deny that there were nuclear shipments from North Korea to Iran."

ElBaradei called North Korea "in my view, the most dangerous proliferation program we are facing."

He said he hoped North Korea would allow U.N. inspectors at some point, but it would depend on the outcome of a six-nation process that got under way last summer in Beijing.

"I haven't seen any indication of a breakthrough," he said.

Authorities also are investigating allegations that Pakistani scientists provided nuclear weapons assistance to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

ElBaradei described those involved as a "very sophisticated network of black market" operators and said he had not seen any evidence that the Pakistani government was involved.

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=540&ncid=721&e=7&u=/ap/20040122/ap_on_re_mi_ea/iran_nuclear

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N.Korea May Have Nuclear Weapons, UN Agency Says

Thu, Jan 22, 2004

LONDON (Reuters) - The U.N.'s nuclear watchdog said on Thursday North Korea ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) may already have developed nuclear weapons and that the reclusive Stalinist state represented "the most serious threat to non-proliferation" in the world today.

Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told BBC television that a recent U.S. delegation's unofficial visit to the country "confirmed that North Korea possibly have nuclear weapons already developed, not only the capability, but nuclear weapons."

A prominent scientist who visited North Korea as part of the unofficial U.S. delegation two weeks ago said on Wednesday that Pyongyang could probably make plutonium metal, a prerequisite for nuclear weapons, and that its nuclear program was of great concern.

"Add to that that North Korea feels very insecure, feels that they need to use nuclear blackmail to achieve their strategic objectives," ElBaradei said in the BBC interview in Davos, Switzerland at the World Economic Forum ([news](#) - [web sites](#)).

"Put all that together and that makes North Korea the most serious threat to non-proliferation as we know it today."

North Korea expelled U.N. nuclear inspectors on December 31, 2002, and later withdrew from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the global pact aimed at stopping the spread of nuclear weapons.

Six nations -- the United States, China, the two Koreas, Russia and Japan -- have tried for months to arrange a further round of diplomatic negotiations on curbing the North's nuclear ambitions, after a first round ended inconclusively in August.

ElBaradei acknowledged the ambiguity surrounding secretive North Korea's nuclear program. "That's why we need to go back as inspectors on the ground to understand fully what is happening," he told the BBC.

The IAEA chief said he hoped Pyongyang would follow up the unofficial U.S. visit with an official visit by the Americans and would send its own representatives to the IAEA for talks.

"They would gain a good deal if they start opening up to the international community," he said. The current situation with North Korea's weapons program "is no good to anybody...We need to defuse the situation."

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&cid=574&ncid=721&e=3&u=/nm/20040122/wl_nm/korea_north_nuclear_elbaradei_dc

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