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New York Times
October 31, 2004

2nd Site With U.N.-Sealed Arms Was Looted, Inspectors Report

By Associated Press

Looters overran an Iraqi complex last year where a bunker holding old chemical weapons was sealed by United Nations monitors, American arms inspectors have reported.

The American inspectors say all of the sealed structures at the Muthanna site, 35 miles northwest of Baghdad, were broken into. But it is unknown if usable chemical warheads were in the bunker, what may have been taken and by whom.

"Clearly, there's a potential concern, but we're unable to estimate the relative level of it because we don't know the condition of the things inside the bunker," said Ewen Buchanan, spokesman for the United Nations arms inspection agency, whose specialists have been barred from Iraq since the invasion.

In a lengthy Oct. 6 report summarizing a fruitless search for banned weapons in Iraq, the inspectors known as the Iraq Survey Group disclosed that widespread looting occurred at Muthanna after the fall of the Iraqi capital in April 2003.

An annex of the 985-page report said every United Nations-sealed location at the desert installation had been breached in the looting spree, and "materials and equipment were removed."

Bunker 2 at Muthanna State Establishment, once Iraq's central chemical weapons production site, was put under the control of the United Nations in early 1991 after it was damaged by an American bomb in the Persian Gulf war. At the time, Iraq said 2,500 sarin-filled artillery rockets had been stored there.

The United Nations teams sealed the bunker with brick and reinforced concrete, rather than immediately attempt the risky job of clearing weapons or remnants from under a collapsed roof and neutralizing them.

A C.I.A. analysis hypothesized in 1999 that all the sarin must have been destroyed by fire. But a United States General Accounting Office review last June questioned that analysis, and the United Nations, whose teams were there, said the extent of destruction was never determined.

One chemical weapons expert said even old, weakened nerve agents - in this case sarin - could be a threat to unprotected civilians.

The weapons involved would be pre-1991 artillery rockets filled with sarin, or their damaged remnants - weapons that were openly declared by Iraq and were under United Nations control until security fell apart with the American attack.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/international/middleeast/31chemical.html>

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New York Times
November 1, 2004

Iran Votes To Resume Nuclear Work

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, Oct. 31 - The hard-line Iranian Parliament unanimously approved a bill on Sunday supporting the resumption of uranium enrichment. The vote comes as talks with European countries over Iran's nuclear activities have so far failed to produce an agreement.

The measure was supported by all 247 lawmakers who were present in the 290-member body, with some chanting "Death to America" and "God is great." The session was carried live on the national radio.

The bill requires the government "to make use of scientists and the country's facilities" to "enable the country to master peaceful nuclear technology, including the nuclear fuel cycle," ISNA, a news agency, reported.

Iran contends that its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes. The United States contends that it could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' monitoring agency, has called on Iran to give up its enrichment program before Nov. 25 or its case will be sent to the Security Council, where Iran could face the imposition of penalties.

Germany, Britain and France have taken the lead in trying to negotiate with Iran to persuade it to suspend its nuclear activities.

No agreements have been reached so far between Iran and the three European countries. Iran has rejected the offer to give up its fuel cycle in return for aid for its nuclear technology and imports of fuel.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Assefi, sounded more conciliatory on Sunday, saying there has been progress in the talks with the European negotiators. A week ago, he described their proposal as unbalanced.

"Offering Iran a supply of fuel is a positive step, which we welcome, but this must not deprive Iran of its right to nuclear technology for peaceful reasons," he said.

The bill passed Sunday must be approved by the Guardian Council, a group also dominated by hard-line leaders, before it becomes law. But the bill does not set a date for the government to resume uranium enrichment.

The speaker of the Parliament, Gholam Ali Haddad Adel, said the vote was a message to the world.

"The message of the absolute vote for the Iranian nation is that Parliament supports national interests," he said. "And the message for the outside world is that Parliament will not give in to coercion."

The leader of the Parliament's commission for national security and foreign policy, Aladdin Boroujerdi, said that sanctions had been in place against Iran for 25 years, and that Iran was not convinced that the Europeans would fulfill any commitments they made in the talks.

Nevertheless, talks with the Europeans are to resume on Friday in Paris. Mr. Assefi said Sunday that Iran was expecting a schedule from the Europeans to show how they would carry out their commitments.

"We expect that in the course of this meeting the Europeans will specify their precise commitments, concrete and clear, and the Islamic Republic will make the best decision in line with its own interests," he added.

Political analysts in Tehran said Parliament's action on Sunday was largely symbolic.

"What they did was merely political, to strengthen the position of Iranian negotiators ahead of the Paris meeting," said Saeed Leylaz, a political analyst and journalist in Tehran. "The country's supreme leader is the sole decision

maker over nuclear activities and the Parliament or government have no power in this regard. Parliament wanted to send a message that this is our real stance even if the negotiators reach a compromise."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/01/international/middleeast/01iran.html>

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Moscow Times

November 1, 2004

Pg. 3

Missile Stoppage

MOSCOW (AP) -- A senior missile designer said Friday that insufficient state funding has led to stoppages in production of new ballistic missiles.

Yury Solomonov, head of the Moscow-based Heat Technology Institute, a leading missile-design center, said that production of the Topol-M ballistic missiles had been halted twice this year due to funding shortages.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2004/11/01/031.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

October 31, 2004

Pg. 7

Serratia Has Dark History In Region

Army test in 1950 may have changed microbial ecology

By Bernadette Tansey, Chronicle Staff Writer

Serratia is a bacterium that some doctors and residents of the Bay Area have been familiar with for many years.

In 1950, government officials believed that serratia did not cause disease. That belief was later used as a justification for a secret post-World War II Army experiment that became a notorious disaster tale about the microbe.

The Army used serratia to test whether enemy agents could launch a biological warfare attack on a port city such as San Francisco from a location miles offshore.

For six days in late September 1950, a small military vessel near San Francisco sprayed a huge cloud of serratia particles into the air while the weather favored dispersal.

Then the Army went looking to find out where it landed. Serratia is known for forming bright red colonies when a soil or water sample is streaked on a culture medium -- a property that made it ideal for the bio-warfare experiment.

Army tests showed that the bacterial cloud had exposed hundreds of thousands of people in a broad swath of Bay Area communities including Sausalito, Albany, Berkeley, Oakland, San Leandro, San Francisco, Daly City and Colma, according to reports that later were declassified. Soon after the spraying, 11 people came down with hard-to-treat infections at the old Stanford University Hospital in San Francisco. By November, one man had died. Edward Nevin, 75, a retired Pacific Gas and Electric Co. worker recovering from a prostate operation, had succumbed to an infection with *Serratia marcescens* that attacked his heart valves.

The outbreak was so unusual that the Stanford doctors wrote it up for a medical journal. But the medics and Nevin's relatives didn't find out about the Army experiment for nearly 26 years, when a series of secret military experiments came to light.

The Chronicle's David Perlman, who reported on the revelations in 1976, found no evidence that the Army had alerted health authorities before it blanketed the region with bacteria. As the news surfaced, doctors started wondering whether the Army experiment that seeded the Bay Area with serratia two decades earlier might be responsible for heart valve infections then cropping up as well as serious infections seen among intravenous drug users in the '60s and '70s, said Dr. Lee Riley, a professor of infectious disease at UC Berkeley.

Before the 1950 experiment, serratia was not a common environmental bacteria in the Bay Area nor did it frequently cause hospital infections, Riley said.

Some people now speculate that descendants of the Army germs are still causing infections here today, he said. The secret bio-warfare test might have permanently changed the microbial ecology of the region, the theory goes. But to prove it, researchers would need to take a DNA fingerprint of the Army strain for comparison with today's microbes. In 2001, *Serratia marcescens* surfaced again as the culprit behind another fatal public health crisis in the Bay Area. Patients were coming down with a painful, hard-to-treat form of meningitis. Public health experts traced the infection to Doc's Pharmacy in Walnut Creek, which mixed some of its own drug products, a legal practice.

At Doc's, investigators found numerous sources of potential contamination -- some stemming from lapses in sterile procedures others from a bubbling tropical fish tank -- in the area where the drug formulas were handled. Among the preparations Doc's had sold was a form of cortisone injected into the spines of dozens of patients with back pain. One of those patients, a healthy, 47-year-old Concord man named George Stahl, died the day after his injection. At first, doctors believed that the death was due to a burst blood vessel. It wasn't discovered until his autopsy that he had died from a massive *serratia* infection.

In the meantime, more patients had received the contaminated shots. Doctors raced to identify and treat them. In the end, of the 38 people dosed with antibiotics, three people died and 10 were hospitalized.

Serratia marcescens: History of trouble

The bacteria behind the loss of half this year's U.S. flu vaccine supply is *Serratia marcescens*, whose characteristic red colonies are shown here under the microscope.

1950: In a secret germ warfare experiment, the Army sprays a vast cloud of *Serratiamarcescens* over the Bay Area from a vessel in waters off San Francisco. The bacteria blanketed the city and surrounding communities in a circle from Sausalito through the East Bay to Colma.

1950: Shortly after the spraying, 11 patients at the old Stanford University Hospital in San Francisco develop unusually tough infections, and one dies. *Serratia* destroyed the heart valves of Edward Nevin, 75.

1976: The Army experiment is made public. Nevin's son Edward Nevin Jr. learns his father's death may have been caused by the secret test. Doctors wonder whether the Army germs established a microbial population that caused other infections in the 1960s and 1970s.

2001: Meningitis outbreak after *Serratia marcescens* contaminates spinal injections prepared by Doc's Pharmacy in Walnut Creek. Three die and 10 hospitalized among the 38 treated.

2004: Emeryville biotechnology firm Chiron Corp.'s stock dives when its entire store of flu vaccine, made in England, is declared unsafe due to contamination with *Serratia marcescens*.

Sources: Michigan State University Communication Technology Lab, MicrobeZoo, Project. Shirley Owens and Catherine McGowan; text by Bernadette Tansey

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/10/31/MNG149JERH1.DTL>

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New York Times

October 31, 2004

Nuclear Secrets

If Brazil Wants To Scare The World, It's Succeeding

By Larry Rohter

RIO de JANEIRO — Throughout the world, Brazil has long had an image as a land of soccer and samba, inhabited by a friendly, easy-going people. So why is it locked in a dispute with the International Atomic Energy Agency, accused by American and other nuclear experts of being a nuclear scofflaw whose actions aid rogue states like North Korea and Iran?

Ever since it began observing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1997, Brazil has resisted allowing international inspectors full access to a secretive uranium enrichment plant 100 miles from here. This month, *Science* magazine sharpened the controversy with an article saying the installation will give Brazil the "breakout capability" to produce enough fissionable material for six nuclear warheads a year, a claim Brazil's government dismissed as fantasy. Though the military dictatorship that ruled until 1985 had a clandestine nuclear arms program, no one is saying Brazil is trying to build an atomic bomb now. Rather, the concern is that it could export uranium enriched here, or technology, and that such exports could end up in the hands of rogue states or terrorists. International experts worry about Brazil's export controls, and its history. In the 1980's, it secretly sent Iraq uranium and technical assistance. To outsiders, Brazil's resistance to inspections doesn't make sense. The world is awash in processed uranium, the nuclear program here has consumed more than \$1 billion that could have cut widespread poverty, and Brazil's secrecy has only raised suspicions about its trustworthiness and ultimate intentions, the argument goes.

"I don't see how this should be one of their major preoccupations," said James Goodby, who was the Clinton administration's chief negotiator on nuclear proliferation issues. "Don't they at least worry what the rest of Latin America, especially the Argentines, think of this?"

Among Brazilians, however, the government's assertiveness, like the nuclear program itself, has proved quite popular. Though an American ambassador here once described Brazil as "a country that punches under its weight," the nuclear issue seems to have awakened latent pugnacity, and insecurities.

Writing in the 1950's, the playwright Nelson Rodrigues saw his countrymen as afflicted with a sense of inferiority, and he coined a phrase that Brazilians now use to describe it: "the mongrel complex." Brazil has always aspired to

be taken seriously as a world power by the heavyweights, and so it pains Brazilians that world leaders could confuse their country with Bolivia, as Ronald Reagan once did, or dismiss a nation so large - it has 180 million people - as "not a serious country," as Charles de Gaulle did.

Whether coincidence or not, the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has launched an advertising campaign to build national self-esteem even as it stands tough on the nuclear issue. He has also stepped up Brazil's campaign for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, leading the daily O Estado de São Paulo to report that Brazil wants to use its nuclear prowess to raise its profile in world affairs.

"What we're seeing are the same ideas of exaggerated nationalism that we have been through so many times before here, the belief that we are going to be a great power and all of that," said José Goldemberg, a physicist who as minister of science and technology in the early 1990's forced an end to the Brazilian military's secret nuclear weapons program. That deep-seated conviction, he added, "leads to a disproportionate response" and what he called "the chauvinist attitude that nobody can come in here."

Resistance to inspections may also be linked to a widespread belief here that an international conspiracy to keep Brazil from becoming a great power is the only thing holding the country back. A whole literature on that subject has led some Brazilians to argue that the International Atomic Energy Agency, despite its record of impartiality elsewhere, is intent on robbing Brazil of a valuable technological secret.

"Why are the Brazilians hiding both the casing and the rotors of their centrifuges?" wonders Henry D. Sokolski, a former Defense Department official who is now executive director of the Washington-based Nonproliferation Policy Education Center. "Their stated reason, the idea that the I.A.E.A. can't be trusted, is incredibly insulting and downright loopy."

For all of Brazil's concerns about being considered a lightweight, it has recorded some notable technological and scientific achievements. Embraer is the world's third largest aircraft manufacturer, a university consortium in São Paulo has become one of the world's leading centers of genome research, and agricultural researchers have developed significant new crop varieties.

But in a land so hungry for respect, that is not enough. The uranium enrichment plant in Resende has been sold to the public as a triumph of "technology that is 100 percent Brazilian," in the words of the minister of science and technology, Eduardo Campos.

Foreign experts say that claim is not true. In the past, Brazil made similar statements about its space program, trying to hide the role of French and Russian technology obtained through exchange programs or on the international black market.

"There is foreign assistance, and they carefully mislead people or spin it in such a way that it fits their definition of what indigenous means," said David Albright, a physicist and former nuclear inspector who is president of the Institute for Science and International Security. "We know the Germans helped them make an earlier model of centrifuge, and we think the Germans provided them the technology on how to work with carbon fiber centrifuges." Doubts have also been raised about just how innovative Brazil's centrifuge process is. They focus on a type of magnetic coil that supposedly makes Brazilian centrifuges more efficient and durable than other nations'. The government has insisted on blocking these from inspectors' view.

But "these claims of a need to protect industrial secrets are exaggerated, since this technology is used routinely in other applications in other parts of the world," Dr. Goldemberg said. "National pride is involved here, but I don't know if that is worth arousing the suspicion of the rest of the world."

The situation has been complicated by Brazil's apparent desire to deal with the outside world under principles that routinely govern relationships here. In the simplest terms, Brazil is arguing that it deserves a wink-and-a-nod exemption from full inspection because Brazilians are nice people, unlike those nasty North Koreans or Iranians. Brazilian society functions on the basis of what is known as "jeitinho," a notion that all formal laws and rules can be maneuvered around if one is clever or charming enough. Of course, the more powerful you are, the better your chances of getting around cumbersome procedures by "driblando," the verb Brazilians use to describe a soccer player's adroitness with the ball.

After inspectors were finally granted partial access to the Resende plant this month, there were predictions that the standoff would soon be overcome by some jeitinho. Most likely it will. But even so, foreign experts expect another confrontation over inspections in the coming years, this one involving the navy's decades-old campaign to build a nuclear-powered submarine.

"Submarines are not subject to the safeguards regimen, that's my view of things," said Roberto Abdenur, who became Brazil's ambassador to the United States early this year after being his country's representative at the International Atomic Energy Agency. "Brazil will always respect its obligations, but, like any other member state, we also insist on our right to protect our technological secrets."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/31/weekinreview/31roht.html>

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Emerging Infectious Diseases: Review of State and Federal Disease Surveillance Efforts.

GAO-04-877, September 30.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-877>

Highlights - <http://www.gao.gov/highlights/d04877high.pdf>

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Los Angeles Times

November 2, 2004

Iran Nuclear Dilemma Looms For Either Occupant Of White House

By Sonni Efron, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Diplomatic efforts to prevent Iran from building an atomic bomb may fail, U.S. officials and foreign diplomats say, leaving the winner of today's presidential election with the threat of an Islamic fundamentalist, nuclear-armed regime in Tehran.

The debate over Iran will probably strain a White House that is already preoccupied with Iraq no matter who wins today's presidential election. Bush administration hard-liners are gearing up for the issue in a potential second term, studying options that include striking a deal with the Iranians, pushing for regime change and launching preemptive attacks.

"The argument will be that Iran policy is broken because ... it was predicated on the false philosophical assumption that Iran can be denied nukes," said an administration official who is familiar with the internal debate.

There is now broad agreement, inside and outside the U.S. government, that Iran will be able to develop a nuclear bomb within a few years. Tehran, for its part, insists that its nuclear program is aimed at generating civilian energy.

Administration hard-liners and their supporters argue that a nuclear Iran would be a regional danger capable of sharing the technology with terrorists. The hard-liners say Iran might use the bomb to threaten Israel or the West.

"The argument will be, we need to take action ... overt and covert" to promote regime change in Tehran, the administration official said.

The government has been unable for four years to reach a consensus on policy toward Iran. Officials are split between those who oppose negotiations and those who believe America must deal with the Islamist regime.

"They have tried ... and they still do not have an Iran policy because they cannot resolve this [internal] conflict," said George Perkovich of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

If Democratic Sen. John F. Kerry is elected, he may back European plans to offer Iran nuclear fuel for non-weapons purposes in exchange for a commitment to drop its uranium enrichment program. If Iran refused such an offer, Kerry has said, it would undercut Tehran's claims that its nuclear agenda is peaceful.

Among military and foreign policy experts in Washington, discussion of preemptive U.S. attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities is already widespread.

"I've heard discussion of between 20 and 40 [suspected nuclear] sites you'd want to hit to deter the program," said Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former Middle East analyst for the CIA who is now at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank in Washington.

The administration is "very seriously" studying the possibility of military action against Iran, said Michael Rubin, another AEI scholar who was a U.S. advisor in Baghdad.

"It's fourth down and the two-minute warning is past," Rubin wrote Friday in an e-mail to The Times from Iraq.

"Our willingness to forgive and forget has made the situation far more dangerous."

On Capitol Hill, most lawmakers have not yet turned their attention to Iran, but staffers predicted it would become the most urgent foreign policy issue before the new Congress. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is likely to hold hearings early in the session, aides said.

"Iran will be the most pressing foreign policy problem for the next administration, just as Iraq was the biggest problem in this administration," said James A. Phillips, a Middle East and terrorism specialist at the conservative Heritage Foundation. "It looks to me that Iran and the U.S. are on a collision course."

A meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations nuclear monitoring group, that could prove to be a crucial turning point is scheduled for Nov. 25 in Vienna. Britain, France and Germany, representing the European Union, have given Iran until that date to comply with IAEA demands that it freeze its uranium enrichment activities in exchange for trade benefits or face possible action, including Security Council sanctions.

On Wednesday, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ruled out long-term suspension of enrichment activities, and his negotiators threatened to end talks with the Europeans. The Iranian parliament backed Khamenei's position Sunday. More talks are planned for Friday in Paris.

Despite the stalemate, the Europeans and the U.S. may not have enough votes on the IAEA Board of Governors to refer Iran's noncompliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to the Security Council.

The United States has insisted that the place to deal with Iran is the Security Council. But the IAEA traditionally makes decisions by consensus, and Russia, a board member, may not agree to take the first step toward sanctions against Iran.

If the dispute goes before the Security Council, diplomats and others say U.S. officials may also not be able to get the votes there for a tougher stance on Iran.

With diplomacy stalled and Iran's nuclear program advancing, preemptive strikes are among the range of U.S. options that includes engagement, deterrence, isolation and containment, and promoting regime change.

The postelection debate will coincide with the 25th anniversary of the crisis that ruptured U.S.-Iranian relations — the Nov. 4, 1979, seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran with 66 American hostages inside.

With American support for the war in Iraq declining and the Pentagon's attention focused there, an attack on Iran — especially before the Iraqi elections planned for January — would be politically perilous.

Bombing would be difficult also because the nuclear equipment is small, portable and easily concealed — possibly underground, if the locations can be defined at all. In addition, U.S. intelligence on Iranian nuclear sites may be of lower quality than the prewar information on Iraq, analysts said.

A successful bombing campaign would take many days, involve a huge number of targets and "kill a lot of Iranians and possibly some Russians," said Geoffrey Kemp of the Nixon Center in Washington. "It is extraordinarily dangerous because it will completely unite the Iranians behind the hard-liners."

Moreover, if the United States were to attack without Security Council approval, the uproar in Britain could cost Prime Minister Tony Blair his job and endanger the British military commitment to Iraq, Kemp said. Others warn of the possibility of Iranian retaliation through increased funding to militant groups.

But those who believe diplomacy will fail and that America must not countenance a nuclear Iran suggest a different outcome

"A targeted strike might cause some backlash, but the amount of time it will set back their program will be worth it," said the AEI's Rubin.

Gerecht argued that the next president has only two real options: "punt or preempt."

Engagement through negotiations would offer Iran's theocratic regime normalized relations with the United States, membership in the World Trade Organization and a guaranteed supply of fuel for its civilian nuclear reactors in exchange for halting support for militant groups and abandoning its suspected pursuit of nuclear arms.

Bush, who often claims to be "tough on terror," could credibly pursue such a course, experts say. But his advisors are believed to be vigorously opposed to that approach.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-usiran2nov02,1,5996385.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Washington Post
November 2, 2004
Pg. 14

U.N. Nuclear Agency Chief Urges Iran To Suspend Activities

By Colum Lynch and Dafna Linzer, Washington Post Staff Writers

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 1 -- The chief of the United Nations' nuclear agency appealed to Iran Monday to suspend its nuclear activities and expressed concern that efforts to halt the spread of atomic weapons have been undercut by North Korea's refusal to allow inspections and by a black market in nuclear materials.

Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, offered a sobering assessment of nonproliferation efforts in an annual address to the 191-member General Assembly of the United Nations. Speaking one day after Iran's parliament voted to affirm the country's right to enrich uranium, ElBaradei urged Iran "to build confidence" by suspending those activities as part of a "comprehensive settlement" to end a nuclear standoff.

France, Britain and Germany offered Iran a deal last month to end its enrichment work in exchange for political and economic incentives, including a guarantee that Iran would not be referred to the Security Council, where the United States could press for sanctions. U.S. diplomats have said they expect negotiations between Iran and the three European countries to result in a deal. But they expressed concern that any agreement could be written in a way that gives the Islamic state wiggle room to continue nuclear experiments that could enhance its bombmaking capabilities.

ElBaradei made only an indirect reference on Monday to the loss of nuclear-related equipment in Iraq, including the disappearance of 377 tons of high explosives that became a central issue in the final week of the U.S. presidential campaign. He defended the agency's prewar record in Iraq, saying that U.N. inspections had succeeded and that he had "been validated" in concluding that Saddam Hussein had not revived his nuclear weapons program.

"The Iraq experience demonstrated that inspections -- while requiring time and patience -- can be effective when the country under inspection is providing less than active cooperation," ElBaradei said.

ElBaradei's address came in an eventful year in which Libya foreswore its nuclear arms program, a Pakistan-based marketplace in nuclear weapons components was unmasked, and North Korea continued for a second year to pursue its nuclear program beyond the view of international monitors.

The U.N. nuclear chief said he cannot "provide any level of assurance" that Pyongyang is not diverting nuclear material to a weapons program. "North Korea continues to pose a serious challenge to the nuclear nonproliferation regime," he said, noting that IAEA inspectors have been barred from the country since 2002.

ElBaradei cited Libya as a great success story, since Moammar Gaddafi agreed to give up his government's nuclear weapons program. ElBaradei cautioned that further investigation is required to verify how completely Libya disclosed its nuclear activities.

On Iran, ElBaradei provided a mixed review of that country's actions. He described Tehran's "failure over an extended period of time to meet many of its obligations" to the nuclear agency, but noted that its cooperation "has improved appreciably." Still, he said, Iran's response to information requests in some cases "has continued to be slow."

"Perhaps the most disturbing lesson to emerge from our work in Iran and Libya is the existence of an extensive illicit market for the supply of nuclear items, which clearly thrived on demand," he said, referring to trade in nuclear equipment by a network headed by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

There have been heightened tensions in the past year between ElBaradei and the Bush administration, which opposes the former Egyptian diplomat's bid for a third term in June. Administration opposition to ElBaradei has grown steadily since the run-up to the Iraq war, when he pronounced, in defiance of the White House, that Iraq no longer had a nuclear weapons program.

Since the war, the administration has kept the agency from inspecting materials in Iraq, and IAEA officials say the administration has refused to respond to its concerns over missing equipment there.

Months before ElBaradei announced he would seek a third term, the State Department began floating names of possible replacements for him. They included Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, two Japanese diplomats and a South Korean official whose name was dropped from the list after Seoul admitted that scientists had conducted covert nuclear experiments.

ElBaradei announced in September that he will stay on if the IAEA board wants him to. "I was asked by just about everybody to stay because there are a lot of issues that are still open and important: Iraq, Iran, the threat of proliferation," he said in an interview Friday. "I made it clear that I am happy to continue public service, which is a personal sacrifice, but I'm happy to improve my golf handicap."

ElBaradei has encouraged Iran and the three European countries to strike a deal before the IAEA Board of Governors meets on Nov. 27 to consider whether to refer Iran's case to the Security Council.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17060-2004Nov1.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

November 1, 2004

Pg. 1

U.S. Ill-Prepared To Handle Bioterror Attack, Experts Warn

Flu vaccine crisis called symptom of far wider problem

By Matthew B. Stannard, Chronicle Staff Writer

The manufacturing failure that has thrown the nation's flu vaccination program into chaos this season is more than a potential crisis for the millions of Americans who need protection from the virus. It is a wake-up call for a health system that is dangerously vulnerable to other epidemics, both natural and man-made, say medical experts.

"We are not well positioned to fight brand new threats or even to detect them as they emerge," said Samuel Bozzette, an infectious disease specialist at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. "The fabric of our system ... is very, very thin."

Public health experts have been warning for years that the nation's capacity to produce vaccines to combat viruses is fast drying up, largely because of corporate consolidation and dwindling profits.

"This is something that has been left to the private sector, which was fine when there were 25 different manufacturers and there was competition," said Helen Halpin, professor of health policy at UC Berkeley. "Now we're down to five (manufacturers) for all vaccines."

The problem has received renewed attention since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, with fears of bioterrorism involving such lethal agents as anthrax. Experts, however, are careful to note that naturally occurring threats can be just as deadly.

An Oct. 12 report by the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and technology research and development firm Sarnoff Corp. found widespread agreement among 30 bioterrorism experts from industry, academia and the government that the nation is not prepared to combat a major epidemic.

"Everybody agrees that we ... are not prepared for a biothreat. When one occurs, there will be disastrous consequences," said Lynne Gilfillan, lead author of the report and director of government operations at Sarnoff. Unlike the flu, which is generally only fatal to the elderly and the infirm, the next epidemic could be far more lethal, she fears.

Even making the annual flu vaccine requires companies to start production up to nine months in advance, predicting which flu strain is likely to hit and growing its counteragent in millions of fertile chicken eggs.

That's one reason another company could not step in and quickly produce a new batch after the flu vaccine produced by Emeryville's Chiron Corp. was found to be contaminated by bacteria. Its factory in Liverpool, England -- source of half of the U.S. flu vaccine -- was shut by British health authorities Oct. 5.

Another reason is that the number of new vaccines and antibiotics and the number of companies creating them have declined, according to the FDA, and the nation has experienced shortages not only of flu vaccine but of basic drugs like penicillin, Bozzette said.

"This is a wake-up call," he said, referring to the current flu vaccine crisis.

In the past three years alone, there have been shortages in eight of the 10 basic vaccines every child is supposed to receive, Halpin said, such as measles, mumps and rubella.

Just two companies made most of the flu vaccine this year, and some treatments are made by a single manufacturer, sometimes outside the United States.

"What are we going to do if we have a pandemic and we are relying on vaccine from other countries?" said Mark Smolinski, senior program officer of biological programs at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, a nonproliferation advocacy group in Washington, D.C. "What's to prevent those companies from being coerced, out of political pressure, into leaving the vaccine in their own countries?"

The reasons for the situation are complex, experts said, but one reason is paramount: money.

Creating a new vaccine is expensive -- estimates typically range from \$800 million to \$1.7 billion -- and the profit margins are slim, at least when compared with other remedies in which the companies can invest their research and development funds.

"These companies are for-profit companies, so they are much better off to be making things like allergy pills and Viagra and things that people are going to need to buy year after year after year," Smolinski said. "Vaccines, if they're effective, potentially they are things people are going to need only once in their lifetime. It's a hard sell." It's an even harder sell in the case of rare, exotic illnesses that are seen as potential bioweapons. Pharmaceutical companies developing vaccines for these diseases face the possibility that they may never sell a single dose.

"No drug company in peacetime is going to step up to that task without a profit motive," said Dean Wilkening, director of the science program for the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. And still they face the possibility that their profit might be cut in the face of national need -- as happened with Bayer during the 2001 anthrax scare, when the company was obliged to sharply reduce its asking price for Ciprofloxacin in the face of a government threat to override its patent if it did not.

Separately, a vaccine for anthrax suffered on the market when fears of side effects led many to refuse to take it. As a result, while some small companies still see a potential profit in developing vaccines for widely known ailments -- especially those affecting children, where the government can be counted on to buy a large supply of a new vaccine -- the big pharmaceutical companies have all but abandoned the vaccine business, Gilfillan said. The federal government has taken steps to address the demand side of the equation, most notably with BioShield, legislation designed to spur development of vaccines and other countermeasures by guaranteeing a government market.

President Bush signed an appropriations bill last month for the first \$2.5 billion of what is slated to be \$5.6 billion over 10 years to purchase and stockpile vaccines. But at an Oct. 6 joint Senate Judiciary and Health Committee hearing on a follow-up measure, BioShield II, Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, said the response to the measure has been anemic.

"Less than 100 companies have actually come forward and said that they have an interest in pursuing biologics," he said. "So that creates a question: What else do we need to do?"

Most of the answers proposed for BioShield II involve added industry incentives, including tax reforms designed to make investment in vaccine development more attractive, increasing federal support for research and development and reforming the FDA approval process.

At the same time, there are proposals to develop a new class of broad-spectrum vaccines that could protect against a wide variety of microbial threats -- known and unknown -- instead of the current, slow bug-by-bug approach. That technology would make it easier to maintain a "warm" biodefense arsenal, because specific vaccines degrade over time.

A number of possible solutions, including some being considered for BioShield II, are controversial. For example, "Wild Card" patent extension, which would allow a firm that develops a priority vaccine or antibiotic to extend the patent on an existing profitable drug of choice, has been criticized by generic drug manufacturers who warned that the idea could drive up health care costs and allow big companies to reap billions for minimal investment. Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., called the idea "Washington at its worst."

A more controversial idea is liability protection for manufacturers. Christine Grant, vice president of government relations at Aventis Pasteur, told the Senate committee that liability concerns caused her company to shy away from developing the next generation anthrax vaccine. "It's very unlikely to be able to obtain commercial insurance for the projects of the nature contemplated by Project BioShield," she said.

The proposal has broad support among academic and public health experts. But critics like Barbara Loe Fisher, president of the National Vaccine Information Center advocacy group, warned that reducing manufacturer liability must be undertaken with care.

"It's critical that in this discussion, whether it's bioterror vaccines or pharmaceuticals, anything that has a risk of death ... that there be some financial accountability among those who make the product, no matter what the reason for the product," she said. "Once you start holding nobody accountable legally, it can be a prescription of abuse." In the long run, some experts say the country needs to start thinking about biodefense in broader ways, even if it ultimately costs taxpayers more money.

"We also have to look at the cycle overall, making it take much less time to produce a therapeutic, regardless of what the bug is," Gilfillan said. "If, on average, pharmaceutical companies are making 18 percent profit on their drugs, let's give them 18 percent profit on vaccines. Work with them. Give them the price they need to (produce vaccines)."

But with luck, a new emphasis on vaccine production could lead to new techniques, benefiting health care in general, Gilfillan said. Similar solutions have been outlined in the past months by a number of think tanks and government agencies, including the FDA and the private, nonprofit Chemical and Biological Arms Control Institute. Gilfillan, Halpin and others experts also recommend unifying the nation's biodefense programs, currently divided among an alphabet-soup of agencies -- from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to Health and Human Services to the FDA.

Gilfillan's candidate to supervise biodefense is the Department of Defense.

"During wars, the Department of Defense has been particularly good at pre-staging American industry to be ready to produce the tanks and the other technology oriented equipment we need. We have to take the same approach to the pharmaceutical industry," she said.

Halpin said she would prefer to see state public health departments take the lead role, but she agreed with the need for a reorganization -- and soon.

"We have done nothing to deal with this threat ... it's just staggering to me," she said. "It was unacceptable before 9/11 and it's an outrage now."

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/11/01/MNG5E9JRK91.DTL>

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Putin Eyes Nuclear Terrorism

By Associated Press

President Vladimir Putin on Monday pushed for passing a United Nations convention on combating nuclear terrorism, saying the document should help coordinate global efforts to prevent mass destruction weapons from falling into terrorists' hands.

Putin voiced hope that the current session of the UN General Assembly would consider Russia's draft of the convention.

"It must create conditions for averting any attempts by terrorists to get hold of nuclear weapons or any other nuclear materials," Putin said in a letter to Iranian President Mohammad Khatami, excerpts of which were released by the Kremlin.

Since the Sept. 11 attacks, concerns have grown that terrorists might try to acquire material for a dirty bomb -- a device that uses conventional explosives to scatter low-level radioactive material over city blocks. It has no atomic chain reaction and requires no highly enriched uranium or plutonium which are kept under tight security and difficult to obtain. Instead, the radioactive component is of lower-grade isotopes, such as those used in medicine or research. The International Atomic Energy Agency estimates as many as 110 countries do not have adequate controls over radioactive devices that could be used to build a dirty bomb.

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