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Washington Post
November 20, 2004
Pg. 10

Diplomats Say Tehran Sends Wrong Signal

Iran Said to Continue to Convert Uranium Despite Pact With Europe

By Dafna Linzer, Washington Post Staff Writer

Despite promises to freeze its nuclear programs, Iran has continued to convert uranium for enrichment, diplomats in Washington and Vienna said yesterday, a situation that they said signals potential trouble for a new and still untested agreement between the Islamic republic and European countries.

Earlier this week Tehran agreed to freeze its nuclear programs in exchange for guarantees that it would not face the prospect of U.N. sanctions while it continued to negotiate with diplomats from Britain, France and Germany. That deal was to take effect Monday, so while Iran's conversion work does not technically violate its terms or

international law, it sparked concern among the Europeans that Iran was going to look for loopholes to continue its nuclear programs.

"This is really a shot in the eye," one European diplomat said, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of hurting the deal more.

To help sell the deal to a skeptical Bush administration, Britain, France and Germany drafted a U.N. resolution making it clear that any Iranian attempt to pursue nuclear materials during the negotiations would result in immediate referral to the Security Council, according to diplomats who have seen the draft.

The unambiguous language in the two-page resolution was shared with Bush administration officials yesterday; a final version is to be presented at the International Atomic Energy Agency's board meeting on Iran next week in Vienna.

Diplomats here and in the Austrian capital confirmed yesterday that Iran has continued to convert raw uranium to hexafluoride gas, known as UF₆, the end stage for the uranium before it can be enriched.

"The Iranians are trying to get as much work in before the suspension takes effect because they know most countries want the freeze to be permanent," a Western diplomat said.

The IAEA expects all of Iran's programs to come to a halt on Monday, in accordance with the European deal. It will then attempt to verify the freeze and report its findings to the agency's board three days later.

Iran, rich in oil and gas, insists its work is geared toward the development of a nuclear energy source. But the scale of its programs and the years of secret work Iran conducted have fueled suspicion that it has a covert weapons program.

U.S. officials have said little publicly about the Euro-Iranian deal, though privately many in the Bush administration are skeptical that it will last more than a few weeks.

State Department spokesman J. Adam Ereli said Wednesday that the United States was "agnostic" about the agreement and has noted that a previous deal among the four countries fell apart in June.

Diplomats for the three European allies have said they are not convinced the deal will hold either but are willing to give direct negotiations a chance.

But the deal has been rocked almost daily by fresh accusations and information since it was accepted on Sunday. During a conversation about Iran with reporters accompanying him on a trip to Chile on Wednesday, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said he had "seen some information that would suggest that they have been actively working on delivery systems."

He continued: "I'm not talking about uranium or fissile material or the warhead, I'm talking about what one does with a warhead."

Powell's comments surprised senior officials in the administration who had been privy to the classified and unverified information about Iran's missile and warhead capabilities.

Earlier this month, U.S. intelligence received hundreds of pages of documents purporting to be Iranian nuclear warhead designs and plans to modify missiles to carry such warheads. But that information, officials said, has not been authenticated by U.S. intelligence. Officials have been proceeding cautiously in attempting to verify the information, mindful of mistakes made in prewar assessments of Iraq's weapons capabilities based partly on bad intelligence.

European officials, worried that Powell's comments undermined their deal with Iran, were told that the secretary misspoke, several sources said.

Powell, whose spokesman said the secretary stood by his remarks, did not refer to the controversy during an interview yesterday with Spanish-language Univision television.

His deputy, Richard L. Armitage, told al-Jazeera television: "There's not a big secret that Iran has been developing missiles. It's always been the combination of a drive for nuclear weapons and missiles that has been a great concern for the United States."

Also this week, an Iranian exile group claimed in Paris that Iran was already beyond the conversion process and was enriching uranium for a bomb. The group, known as the National Council for Resistance in Iran, offered no evidence for its allegations.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A63735-2004Nov19.html>

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Los Angeles Times

November 20, 2004

Powell Firm On Iran Allegations

By Sonni Efron, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin L. Powell stands by his charge that Iran is working on a missile system to deliver a nuclear bomb and believes the intelligence he cited in making the accusation is sound, State Department officials said Friday.

Powell's unscripted remarks Wednesday, apparently based on classified information, have created a furor, with some sources saying his intelligence on an Iranian effort to put warheads on missiles was weak. U.S. officials countered the criticism in comments in Washington and South America.

"The information was good enough to talk about," a senior State Department official said in Santiago, Chile, where Powell was attending an Asia-Pacific economic summit.

"The secretary did not misspeak," department spokesman Adam Ereli said in Washington. "The secretary knows exactly what he was talking about."

Ereli declined to discuss the information underlying Powell's remarks but said the specific allegation came against the backdrop of long-standing U.S. charges that Iran had been trying to develop nuclear weapons.

"We believe we are on very, very solid ground in pointing to a clandestine effort by Iran to develop weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems," Ereli said, adding that the U.S. would continue to press its case diplomatically. Iran insists that its nuclear programs are for peaceful civilian purposes.

Powell's remarks surprised and confused the arms control community as well as European allies who last weekend reached a deal with Iran on its nuclear programs. Under the agreement, Tehran will freeze its uranium enrichment efforts in exchange for trade concessions.

The agreement and how to verify that Iran is complying with it will be the subject of intensive discussions at a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Thursday.

U.S. officials said Powell's remarks were not intended to undermine the agreement, which was negotiated by Britain, France and Germany. But analysts said Powell was putting out a marker that the freeze on enrichment — even if it can be verified — addresses only one of many U.S. concerns about Iran's nuclear ambitions. Arms control experts have also been concerned about the testing of Iran's new Shahab-3 medium-range missile in August.

"You don't redesign your reentry vehicle, which is ... a lot of work, unless you have something specific you want to put in there," said Patrick Clawson, an Iran watcher at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The Bush administration has also raised with the IAEA its growing concern that Iran is working on a nuclear warhead design, Clawson said. He said government officials had provided the agency with satellite photos showing a site outside Tehran suitable for testing high explosives. Clawson questioned whether such sites would be accessible to IAEA inspectors.

In Vienna, diplomats told news services that Iran was producing large amounts of a gas used in the enrichment process, days before it must halt such work under the new accord.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-usiran20nov20,1,7370227.story>

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New York Times
November 20, 2004

Doubts Persist On Iran Nuclear Arms Goals

By Douglas Jehl and William J. Broad

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19 - Despite having collected substantial information about Iran's nuclear and weapons programs over the last several years, Western officials have limited intelligence about the crucial question of whether Tehran is trying to meld those two programs to produce a nuclear warhead that can be carried by a missile, administration officials said Friday.

The inability to answer that question so far poses an obstacle to the Bush administration's efforts to press for a hard line against the Tehran government.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said this week that he had seen intelligence indicating that Iran was "working hard" to produce a functioning nuclear-tipped missile. American officials said Friday that while such an effort would not be surprising, it would be significant if the new intelligence is true. But they suggested the intelligence had come from a single source and had not yet been verified, a detail first reported by The Washington Post.

A State Department spokesman, Adam Ereli, defended Mr. Powell's comments on Friday, saying, "We believe we are on very, very solid ground in pointing to a clandestine effort by Iran to develop weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems."

United Nations inspections in 2003 disclosed that Iran was capable of enriching uranium, the main ingredient in a nuclear bomb. In the past year, they have deeply investigated Iran's nuclear program, which Iran says is for civilian use.

In recent days, the inspectors discovered that Iran had mastered a central technology needed to produce weapons-grade uranium that can be used to make nuclear bombs, Western diplomats based in Vienna said Friday. But the inspectors, with the International Atomic Energy Agency, have not been able to shed much light on whether Iran has begun work on a covert nuclear program that could produce a weapon within the next several years, as Western intelligence agencies believe.

American allies in Europe have now reached an agreement with Iran to suspend work on its nuclear program. The accord has yet to take effect.

The Bush administration has been skeptical of the deal, and President Bush is expected to raise the issue of Iran when he meets in Chile on Saturday morning with Vladimir V. Putin, the Russian leader.

Iran may also be discussed next week when Mr. Powell attends a conference at an Egyptian resort, Sharm el Sheik, which representatives of Iran are also expected to attend.

In many ways, the state of Western knowledge about the civilian nuclear program acknowledged by Iran is much more extensive than was the state of knowledge about Iraq at the time of the American invasion in 2003, after a long period without United Nations inspectors there.

Still, the problem that the administration is facing on Iran, in seeking to enlist allies behind a confrontational approach on the basis of limited intelligence, has echoes of the dilemma the Bush administration faced before the Iraq invasion.

After the experience in Iraq, where American intelligence about illicit weapons turned out to be badly overstated, the lesson now being applied in the case of Iran is "to be appropriately skeptical about intelligence claims, and to really do your homework," a State Department official said Friday.

"We're not in a Feb. 5 mode on Iran," the official said, referring to the date in 2003 when Mr. Powell presented what later proved to be a flawed case against Iraq to the United Nations Security Council, "in the sense that we're not ready to submit our information to public scrutiny."

Intelligence on Iran, as was the case with Iraq before the invasion, is riddled with holes, some current and former government officials acknowledge.

"Prior to the invasion of Iraq, we knew our intelligence on Iraq was inadequate but we did not realize how poor it actually was," said Kenneth M. Pollack, a former Central Intelligence Agency analyst who is the author of a new book on Iran. "Today, most intelligence officials believe that our intelligence about Iranian decision making and weapons of mass destruction is even more fragmentary and uncertain than what we believed to be our state of knowledge about Iraq."

Even so, United Nations inspectors have learned in recent days that Iran is producing large amounts of uranium hexafluoride at the gas processing facilities at its vast installation in Isfahan, said Western diplomats who are in contact with the I.A.E.A. Although Iran's uranium enrichment process is frozen under the agreement announced Monday with Britain, France and Germany, Iran has said it will begin suspension of its enrichment activities on Dec. 22.

Officials in Vienna, Paris and London who are familiar with Iran's nuclear program said they suspected that Iran intended to prove to the world its mastery of the crucial step of the process before the agreement goes into effect. Beyond the United Nations inspectors, intelligence about Iran has come from a variety of sources.

In recent years, some of the most important information about Iran's nuclear program has been brought to the attention of American intelligence by a dissident group, the People's Mujahedeen of Iran. That group, which issued new claims this week, has sometimes shown an inconsistent record as a source of intelligence information.

Former intelligence officials said that in recent months American intelligence officers have gained a new window on Iran as a result of their operations in neighboring Iraq. But it was not clear whether the large flow of new information being gathered on Iran from Iraq was proving reliable, the former officials said.

American intelligence officials have always described Iran as a hard target, because of the impenetrability of the clerical government, which along with Iran's intelligence service and Revolutionary Guards maintains a monopoly on sensitive national security information. The Bush administration has said it believes that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program, but it has not presented evidence to back up those assertions.

Beyond the debate over Mr. Powell's comments on Iran, experts have long known that it is pursuing advanced missile and atomic programs. Mr. Powell's comments were the strongest suggestion to date from an American official that Iran might have gone far toward melding these two efforts to create a deliverable nuclear warhead, potentially crossing a deadly line.

The Iranians say that their nuclear reactor program is for making electricity and that the rocket program for making conventional military arms as well as for putting satellites into orbit. But the size, secrecy and aggressiveness of both programs have sown doubt among federal and private experts.

Suspensions soared in the past year as European inspectors found that Iran had hidden some of its most sensitive nuclear work for as long as 18 years, and that some equipment bore traces of uranium pure enough to make nuclear arms. In August, a new surprise emerged as Iran test-fired a rocket that bore a suspicious-looking nose cone. The rocket was an updated version of their Shahab-3 missile, and the test ignited a quiet debate among experts over whether its advanced nose cone was designed to carry a nuclear warhead. For two decades, the Iranians have been developing generations of long-range rockets with the aid of North Korea, and the Shahab, which means shooting star in Persian, stands at the cutting edge.

After last summer's test-firing, Charles P. Vick, an expert on the Iranian program at GlobalSecurity.org, a research group based in Alexandria, Va., said, "What I've seen fly is a prototype for a nuclear warhead."

But other experts said the nose cone might be part of Iran's preparations for launching a satellite into orbit, which Tehran has said it plans to do in April. It was too thin, one said, to hold a relatively crude nuclear weapon.

"These guys need all the space they can get" atop a missile, said a European expert who closely follows the Iranian program.

Elaine Sciolino contributed reporting from Paris for this article.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/20/international/middleeast/20intel.html?oref=login>

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New York Times

November 21, 2004

Pg. 1

Bush Says Iran Speeds Output Of A-Bomb Fuel

By David E. Sanger

SANTIAGO, Chile, Nov. 20 - President Bush increased the administration's pressure on Iran on Saturday, saying there were indications that the country was speeding forward in its production of a key ingredient for nuclear weapons fuel, a move he said was "a very serious matter" that undercut Iran's denials that it was seeking to build weapons.

On the first day here of the annual gathering of Pacific Rim leaders, his first summit meeting since winning re-election, Mr. Bush also tried to re-establish a unified front against the other nuclear challenge facing his second term: North Korea.

In back-to-back meetings with the leaders of China, Japan and South Korea here Saturday morning, Mr. Bush urged each to draw North Korea back into six-nation negotiations. And in a speech later, he issued a direct challenge to North Korea's reclusive leader that echoed President Reagan's demand in 1987 for the dismantling of the Berlin Wall. After the meetings, he said, he was convinced "that the will is strong, that the effort is united and the message is clear to Mr. Kim Jong Il: Get rid of your nuclear weapons programs."

His aides have played down informal intelligence estimates that the country had already produced enough plutonium in the past two years to manufacture six additional nuclear weapons.

Mr. Bush's efforts here underscored his determination to reverse two nuclear projects that appear to have made significant progress while American attention has been focused on Iraq.

In North Korea, he is facing a country that has defied every previous effort he has made to force it to dismantle what it has already built. And in Iran's case, he is clearly skeptical about a European-led effort to suspend the country's manufacture of nuclear material.

He told reporters on Saturday that he was "concerned about reports" that said Iran appeared "willing to speed up processing of materials that could lead to a nuclear weapon." Diplomats had said the day before that Iran had told the International Atomic Energy Agency that it was racing to produce uranium hexafluoride, a gas that can be enriched into bomb fuel, before it begins to observe the temporary suspension of nuclear activity that it negotiated with the Europeans.

Following Mr. Bush's assertion on Saturday that Iran had accelerated its uranium enrichment, Mr. Powell appeared at a news conference here with Foreign Minister Ignacio Walker Prieto of Chile and was asked to provide details to back that up but declined to do so. He said that in the past four years, as a result of American cries of alarm about Iran's intentions, the international community was now "as concerned as we are" about the problem.

The focus of most of Mr. Bush's sessions was North Korea, and one participant said Mr. Bush hinted he would show "some flexibility" in offering incentives to the North, a subject of furious infighting within the administration.

But a senior American official told reporters this afternoon that could only happen after North Korea returned to the negotiating table. "The North Korean strategy of running out the clock didn't work," this official said, referring to the speculation that the North thought Mr. Bush would be defeated on Election Day.

In 2003, Mr. Bush said he "will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea," and in April 2004 he told a convention of newspaper editors in Washington that a nuclear program in Iran was "intolerable" and would be dealt with, starting at the United Nations if necessary. He did not repeat either phrase on Saturday, and the agreement with Europe appears to have halted, at least temporarily, the administration's hopes of taking the Iranian program to the United Nations Security Council this month.

But Mr. Bush's quickness to seize on the Iranian production of uranium hexafluoride was driven, administration officials said, by a sense among his national security aides that there is still time to stop Iran from actually producing a weapon. "We're past that point with North Korea," one senior adviser said recently. "With the North, it's a question of unwinding what's already happened."

So far, there have been three sessions of talks involving North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States, but no real agreement on the scope of the North Korean program. Meanwhile, North Korea appears to have reprocessed a trove of 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods.

In preparation for the meeting on Saturday morning with China's president, Hu Jintao, American officials took the unusual step several weeks ago of passing to Beijing what one senior Asian official called "classified packets" of data intended to convince the Chinese that the North has two weapons programs under way.

Chinese leaders had few doubts that the North has been trying to produce plutonium weapons, and they have not questioned unofficial American intelligence estimates that the North has reprocessed enough plutonium for four to six weapons since inspectors were expelled from the country nearly two years ago.

But until recently China expressed considerable doubts about a second program that the United States believes the North started with help from A. Q. Khan, then the head of Pakistan's nuclear weapons project. Like the Iranian program, which also received extensive aid from Mr. Khan's network in the 1990's, the North's program involves enriching uranium to make bomb fuel. "The Chinese made their own inquiries from Pakistan, and we believe they got confirmation there," said one senior Asian official involved in the Saturday talks with President Bush. "They don't seem to be questioning the validity of that intelligence anymore, at least in private."

But Mr. Bush was clearly concerned that South Korea's president, Roh Moo Hyun, might diverge from the American strategy, and offer the North more aid and investment even before it agrees to surrender its weapons, halt its production of new weapons and allow open inspections.

Iran's intentions are unclear. If it is truly suspending the production of all nuclear fuel, it is unclear why it would work so quickly to finish production of the raw material that is fed into centrifuges and enriched. At low enrichment levels, the fuel could be used to produce nuclear power; at high enrichment levels, it could make the core of a bomb. American officials said Mr. Bush spoke out because he wanted to highlight the possibility that Iran could cheat on its deal with the Europeans, and to raise the possibility that it had a secret complex of centrifuges that could keep producing bomb fuel. A dissident group operating outside Iran charged this week that Tehran was doing exactly that, but American officials say they cannot verify the claim.

Mr. Bush's day was tense in other ways, as well. He had an unusual encounter with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia, questioning him over lunch about Mr. Putin's efforts to concentrate more power in the Kremlin. It was the first time Mr. Bush had expressed his concerns in person to the Russian leader. An American official said later that Mr. Putin responded with "a very long explanation, went back deep into Russian history, the Stalinist period" and said the country was still struggling to "develop a Russian-style democracy."

The conversation did not appear to satisfy either side, but the American official said it would be the "basis for further conversations."

Then, in an odd scene on Saturday before dinner, Mr. Bush had to rescue his lead secret service agent.

The agent had been blocked from entering the ornate dinner hall and was surrounded by a scrum of shoving Chilean security officers. The president, realizing what was happening, turned around and walked up to the group, reached in to pull his agent free, and walked back into the hall, shaking his head.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/21/politics/21prexy.html>

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Baltimore Sun

November 21, 2004

Hussein Focused Arms Race On Rockets

Weapons of mass destruction had taken back seat to missiles

By Robert Little, Sun National Staff

While the White House was fixated on Saddam Hussein's interest in procuring biological and chemical weapons, evidence uncovered by American investigators suggests that the Iraqi president spent his final years in power more

determined to develop and deploy conventional ballistic missiles, hoping to keep pace with his neighbors in the Middle East.

And in that quest for weapons of more-modest destruction, the evidence shows that Iraq was not a major threat to its neighbors, much less to Europe or the United States.

The picture of Middle East security that is coming into focus after 20 months of war suggests that Iraq was less focused on chemical, biological and nuclear weapons over the past decade than it was locked in a regional arms race for short-range conventional weapons, in which Iran, Israel and Syria stand out as the most potent contestants. The profusion of ballistic missiles in the Middle East is unrivaled by any other region in the world, creating a delicate power balance in which Hussein fought determinedly, if unsuccessfully, to tip the scale.

The tension revealed itself further last week when Iran announced that it has begun mass-producing an advanced missile, called the Shehab-3, whose range of more than 1,300 kilometers brings all of Israel and most of Saudi Arabia within its reach. The announcement was followed by claims from an Iranian resistance group that the country also has a covert program to produce enriched uranium, then by suggestions from Secretary of State Colin L. Powell that the United States has unconfirmed evidence that Iran is working to outfit its missiles to carry a nuclear bomb. The news fueled concerns that a new nuclear power is rising in the Middle East.

But while the potential threat of weapons of mass destruction continues to be the more dangerous wildcard in the Middle East, many analysts also saw in Iran's boast a threat that, like Hussein's, was far more conventional, and designed more to frighten its adversaries than to exterminate them.

"I think it's a threat, but it's not an unconventional threat," said Michael Donovan, research analyst for the Center for Defense Information in Washington. "The Iranians, like Saddam and Syria and other countries in the Middle East, have figured out that ballistic missiles are the poor man's strategic weapon."

Ballistic missiles, which cost relatively little and are easy to use and conceal, have long been the primary counterweight in the Middle East's balance of power. Former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens, in an essay he wrote before the war, said that "in the Middle East today there are probably more ballistic missiles per square kilometer than exist anywhere else in the world."

The types of ballistic missiles common in the Middle East are generally inaccurate and not particularly deadly when armed with a conventional explosive. A successful strike during the Iran-Iraq war, for instance, might have killed half a dozen people but was just as likely to kill no one. But missiles cost far less to operate and maintain than an air force, and they were easily acquired over the past few decades from countries such as North Korea and Russia. Israel, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates all have missiles capable of delivering explosive payloads to their neighbors, and most of them are reportedly seeking to upgrade their arsenals with longer range, better guidance systems and more payload capacity. Evidence uncovered since the war in Iraq began shows that Saddam Hussein understood the dynamics as well as anyone.

While American investigators have found little evidence that Hussein continued his efforts to develop nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, evidence of Hussein's interest in longer-range missiles is far more clear and abundant. Ballistic missile development was one area in which Hussein had the plans, the infrastructure and the intention of building his arsenal, and he devised schemes to sidestep or violate the United Nations sanctions that placed limits on the range of missiles he could build or buy.

Despite a 150-kilometer restriction imposed by the cease-fire agreement that ended the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Hussein authorized his scientists to design missiles with ranges of 1,000 kilometers or more, according to the CIA's investigation of Iraqi weapons conducted since the war began. None of the missiles were ever produced and only one passed the design phase, the investigation found, but work on them continued until the start of the war last year. Iraqi scientists also built a stand for testing rocket motors that was conspicuously over-engineered, and thus capable of testing missiles far more powerful than the United Nations allowed. And in 2001, Iraq imported at least 380 liquid-propellant engines from Eastern Europe designed for the Russian SA-2 anti-aircraft missile - allowed under the U.N. restrictions - but in suspiciously high quantities.

Aware that countries such as India have designed medium-range missiles that are powered by a cluster of SA-2 engines, the inspectors concluded that Hussein was hoping to violate the range limitations using equipment he was permitted to acquire. They also uncovered drawings in Iraq, dated August 2000, showing designs for a missile using five SA-2s, which would have given it a range of about 1,000 kilometers.

In his report to Congress late last year, American weapons inspector David Kay described a covert Iraqi program to manufacture propellant for a variant of the Scud missile that was prohibited under the U.N. sanctions. The scientists in that program described how they were instructed to conceal the program from U.N. inspectors. Kay's investigators said they uncovered "clandestine attempts ... to obtain from North Korea technology related to 1,300 km range ballistic missiles."

The final report from Kay's successor at the CIA's Iraqi Survey Group, Charles A. Duelfer, detailed Iraqi plans for three missiles with ranges between 400 and 1,000 kilometers, as well as plans for a 1,000-kilometer cruise missile and early plans for an unmanned aircraft.

The reports also showed, however, that Iraq's missile threat had been effectively contained by the U.N. sanctions, leaving it with only a modest arsenal of short-range weapons, none of which were effectively deployed during the war with the United States. U.N. inspectors confirmed in the 1990s that Iraq destroyed 61 prohibited missiles, and while at least a dozen longer-range Scuds remained unaccounted for when the war began, those missiles were never found. The CIA now believes that all of Iraq's Scud missiles were destroyed by 1991.

Still, enough missile-related evidence was uncovered that investigators have done little to temper their prewar suspicions about Iraq's programs - in contrast with their altered theories about Hussein's chemical and biological ambitions.

"Given Iraq's investments in technology and infrastructure improvements, an effective procurement network, skilled scientists, and designs already on the books for longer range missiles, [the Iraqi Survey Group] assesses that Saddam clearly intended to reconstitute long-range delivery systems," Duelfer wrote in his report, released last month.

The report also added: "The systems potentially were for WMD."

Security analysts don't all concur that a chemical, biological or nuclear arsenal was the immediate goal of Hussein's ballistic missile program. With the exception of the weapons in Israel's nuclear arsenal, most missiles in the Middle East are too inaccurate and under-powered to serve as effective nuclear weapons, and biological and chemical weapons are not particularly effective when paired with a delivery vehicle that explodes on impact.

Many analysts suspect that Hussein's interest in missiles grew from his experiences during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s, which devolved toward its end into a barrage of back-and-forth conventional missile assaults on Baghdad and Tehran that came to be known as the "war of the cities."

Iraq is also believed to have launched chemical attacks during the war, using sarin, mustard gas and the nerve agent Tabun against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. But the missiles Iraq launched are thought to have been almost exclusively armed with conventional explosives.

"Saddam believed very strongly that missiles and chemical weapons saved Iraq during the war with Iran, and it must have been very demoralizing to have restrictions placed on him that meant he could no longer reach his primary enemy," said Michael Eisenstadt, a Middle East specialist at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"Hey, the only country in modern times that has been able to hit at Israel's rear was Iraq, with missiles," he added, referring to attacks during the Persian Gulf War in 1991. "I'm sure he felt like that afforded him some degree of prestige."

<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/iraq/bal-te.missiles21nov21.1,3172521.story>

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Washington Post
November 21, 2004
Pg. 24

Bush Toughens Line On Nuclear Threats

President Singles Out Iran, N. Korea

By Mike Allen and Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writers

SANTIAGO, Chile, Nov. 20 -- President Bush said Saturday that he believes Iran is continuing to pursue a nuclear weapon, which he called "a very serious matter," and said he had won pledges from Asian allies to increase pressure on North Korea's leader to restart disarmament talks.

During his reelection campaign, Bush said little about the two nuclear threats. But with aides contending that his victory gave him new international leverage, he took confrontational lines with both countries, insisting they disarm but pledging to pursue that goal diplomatically.

At his first international summit since being reelected, and on his first trip abroad in five months, Bush escalated warnings issued by outgoing Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, saying he did not believe claims by Iran's ruling clerics, who have denied that the country was taking steps to develop a nuclear weapon.

Bush said the United States was closely monitoring Iran's activities in the run-up to Thursday, when the International Atomic Energy Agency is scheduled to meet in Vienna to determine whether to refer the country's nuclear activity to the U.N. Security Council. In an agreement with Britain, France and Germany that was announced this month, Iran agreed to suspend uranium enrichment, the pivotal process in a peaceful nuclear energy program capable of being diverted for military use.

"We're concerned about reports that show that prior to a certain international meeting, they're willing to speed up processing of materials that could lead to a nuclear weapon," Bush said on the sidelines of the 12th annual Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum. "The world knows it's a serious matter, and we're working together to solve this matter."

Bush said it was "very important for the Iranian government to hear that we are concerned about their desires," and that he would continue working with European powers "to convince the Iranians to give up any nuclear ambitions they may have."

"The reason why they're involved is because they do believe that Iran has got nuclear ambitions, as do we, as do many around the world," Bush said, as Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi stood at his side.

The president met with the leaders of his four partners in arms talks with North Korea -- China, Japan, Russia and South Korea -- and said afterward that all had supported his call for them to bolster their united front to try to get North Korea to return to talks that have been on hold since June. Bush went into the summit determined to urge them to more energetically apply pressure on North Korea, and by day's end, he had declared his diplomacy a success.

In a speech to chief executives meeting here at the base of the Andes Mountains, Bush said: "I can report to you today, having visited with the other nations involved in that collaborative effort, that the will is strong, that the effort is united and the message is clear to Mr. Kim Jong Il: Get rid of your nuclear weapons programs."

A Chinese Foreign Ministry official told reporters that President Hu Jintao had said to Bush, "This is a rather complex issue, and it requires all relevant parties to display patience, flexibility and sincerity."

Bush ate lunch with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and in contrast to their previously jovial appearances together, the two men were silent when photographers were briefly ushered in. A senior administration official who attended the meeting said Bush expressed skepticism about Putin's proposals to change the Russian political system in ways that have raised questions about his commitment to democracy.

The official said Bush "noted the concerns that we've had about checks and balances, about the centralization of power inside Russia, and asked Putin to give his own explanation of what was going on and why these steps were being taken inside Russia."

The official said Putin "went back deep into Russian history, the Stalinist period, and made the point that what the Russian government was trying to do at this point was to develop a democratic style of government that was consistent with Russian history and the unique problems that Russia faced as a multiethnic society on a large landmass."

Bush branded Iran part of an "axis of evil" in 2002, along with Iraq and North Korea, and in April said he it would be "intolerable" if Iran were to develop an atomic weapon. Iran agreed Monday to a deal brokered by three European powers -- Britain, France and Germany -- to indefinitely suspend the process until a permanent agreement could be reached to ensure that Tehran complies with its obligations as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But diplomats in Vienna have reported that Iran is scrambling to convert nearly raw uranium, also called yellowcake, into hexafluoride gas, the end stage for the uranium before it can be enriched, in advance of the deadline.

Powell, appearing a few hours after Bush at a joint press conference with Chile's foreign minister, Ignacio Walker, expressed frustration with Iran over what he depicted as its clandestine efforts to develop a nuclear weapon.

"Iran has been working on long-range missiles," Powell said. "They have been working on intercontinental range missiles, which they claim are for perhaps space-launch purposes. And we have reason to believe that when you see what they have been doing, the high aspects of their nuclear programs, when you see what they have been doing over the years with missiles and potential delivery systems, it is a cause of concern."

Speaking about North Korea after his meeting with Koizumi, Bush said it was "very important for the leader of North Korea to understand that the six-party talks will be the framework in which we continue to discuss the mutual goal we all have, which is to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons."

A Japanese government official said after the meeting that Koizumi had told Bush he wanted "to continue cooperation toward Iraq's reconstruction," but stopped short of promising to extend the deployment of Japanese troops beyond their current commitment of Dec. 14.

Bush met with Hu, China's president, for the first time since Hu assumed his full powers. "I invited President Hu to come and visit the United States as soon as he can, and he invited me to China," Bush said.

During Bush's meeting with the chief executives, he won the heartiest applause when he recognized "a man who has served our country so well, a great United States secretary of state, Colin Powell."

"Right after my speech, he's headed to the Middle East. That's a heck of a retirement, Mr. Secretary," Bush said, drawing laughter. "I look forward to your report when you get back."

Bush, reprising an issue he had discussed with Koizumi, acknowledged to the leaders his "concern about whether or not our government is dedicated to dealing with our deficits."

He said he looked forward to outlining to Congress in his State of the Union address in January the steps he will take in his new budget to deal with the deficit.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A64951-2004Nov20.html>

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New York Times
November 22, 2004

Iran To Suspend Uranium Enrichment Today

By Nazila Fathi

TEHRAN, Nov. 21 - Iran pledged Sunday to meet its deadline and suspend its uranium enrichment activities on Monday, in a sign of cooperation even as the United States has been stepping up pressure over the country's nuclear program.

"The suspension will begin tomorrow," the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Assefi, told journalists. "We have said that we will suspend our enrichment activities, and we will do it."

Iran agreed earlier this month with Britain, Germany and France to suspend its uranium enrichment program in return for economic benefits. The country said it would halt production on Nov. 22 in a letter to the International Atomic Energy Agency, which will meet Thursday to decide whether to send Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions.

While Iran has insisted that its nuclear program is for electricity production only, the United States has accused it of trying to make nuclear weapons. The Bush administration increased its pressure on Iran after diplomats familiar with the country's case accused it last week of racing to produce significant quantities of uranium hexafluoride, a gas that can be enriched for use in nuclear weapons, right up to its deadline.

An Iranian opposition group also said last week in Vienna and in Paris that Tehran was deceiving the world and conducting a secret weapons program at an undisclosed site.

Mr. Assefi dismissed accusations about its nuclear program and said the report about uranium hexafluoride production was "just a part of the propaganda to weaken relations between Iran and the agency and the work on building trust with the Europeans."

"What we have been doing over the past few days conforms with the Paris accord and had been carried out under the supervision of the agency," he added.

Mr. Assefi accused the United States of "trickery," and said the Bush administration's recent allegations about Iran's nuclear activities were "a sign of its anger."

"The Americans are not happy about our cooperation with the Europeans, but taking into account that we have cooperated with the I.A.E.A. and Europe, there is nothing to be worried about," he said.

Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, also denied the charges that Iran had accelerated enrichment activities, the official IRNA news agency reported.

A team of inspectors from the I.A.E.A. is in Iran to police the complete suspension of activities related to uranium enrichment.

In addition, a four-member group from the agency's Board of Governors visited Iran's conversion plant in the city of Isfahan on Saturday. The team is scheduled to return to Vienna on Monday.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/22/international/middleeast/22iran.html>

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New York Times

HORRORS

Clues on Hostages Emerge From Houses in Falluja

By ROBERT F. WORTH

Published: November 22, 2004

FALLUJA, Iraq, Nov. 21 - In one house hung a black banner with the words "One God and Jihad" and a distinctive yellow sun, terrifyingly familiar as the backdrop to videotaped beheadings by the group of that name. In another house there was a wire cage large enough to hold a human and a wall marked with Arabic writing and what appears to be a fingerprint in dried blood.

Before the doors to these houses in Falluja were thrown open to two reporters on Sunday, soldiers and intelligence officers had carried away other items from them, handcuffs, shackles, militant propaganda, bayonets, and knives - crusted with what looked like blood and resembling the ones used in the beheadings. A detailed photograph-catalog of the items was shown to the reporters.

American and Iraqi government officials have long said that Falluja was a center of the Iraqi insurgency and a depot where militants held hostages with impunity before the American-led invasion two weeks ago. A tour of the two houses on Sunday represented the first time that American journalists saw direct evidence of the places where the hostages may have been imprisoned and, in some cases, killed in videotaped executions.

Even so, there is no way to know for now exactly what happened here. The houses were discovered only a few days ago, and forensic investigators have not yet done DNA testing, analyzed the catalogued items that were removed, or compared this setting with the videos. So it cannot be said for certain that these were the last rooms that foreign or Iraqi hostages saw.

But both locations were found through Iraqi informants, one of them someone who said that he had been held hostage in the house with the black banner, American investigators said. They quoted the informant as saying he had heard the voices of at least three hostages in neighboring rooms, including one he believed to be that of Kenneth Bigley, the British engineer decapitated in early October.

The houses are among almost 20 sites discovered during the past two weeks in Falluja where American and Iraqi military officers contend that atrocities were committed. Maj. Jim West, an intelligence officer with the First Marine Expeditionary Force, said the sites included houses where Western hostages appear to have been held and others where insurgents tortured or killed residents to help enforce their rule in the city, some of them basement rooms with bloody handprints on the wall.

Last week, Iraqi soldiers searching a house discovered what appeared to be a command center for militants associated with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian militant who is the most wanted insurgent in Iraq. In that house, the soldiers found what they said were believed to be letters between Mr. Zarqawi and some of his lieutenants, along with weapons, computers, bomb-making materials and medical supplies.

And there has been at least one discovery of a quite different kind. Near the house with the cage, soldiers searched a house that officials said contained a primitive chemical weapons lab. They said the lab had sodium cyanide, potassium cyanide, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid and other chemicals, along with indications that insurgents were trying to use them to make bombs.

It is not clear how the officials identified the chemicals or what kind of weapons the insurgents had been hoping to make. There were no reports of chemical weapons used in the battle for Falluja.

The two houses that had been filled with the paraphernalia of torture, though, provided the most graphic glimpse yet of what seem to have been horrific prisons.

The black banner was found inside a house in southeast Falluja, site of the worst fighting last week. In full, the yellow lettering on the banner read "The organization of One God and Jihad," the former name of the network run by Mr. Zarqawi.

The group, which has changed its name to Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, is believed to be responsible for bombings, beheadings and ambushes that have left hundreds dead across Iraq. Eliminating Mr. Zarqawi's network was one of the goals of the American-led offensive in Falluja.

One of the houses, in a residential area strewn with rubble, contains two rooms where American military officials say they believe that hostages were kept, with metal handcuffs, plastic zip cuffs and shackles. A shackle had been attached to a rod in the bathroom, apparently to keep hostages chained, officials said.

When a reporter toured the house with Marine officers on Sunday, the handcuffs and shackles had been removed, but it was still strewn with the black masks and black tennis sneakers favored by the insurgents.

Underneath a staircase is an alcove where American officials believe that hostages were interrogated and tortured. Its walls are stained with a dark substance, with two large nails sticking out.

Investigators also found cellphones, computer disks, burned documents and cassette players in the house, as well as the bayonets and large knives, officials said. The other house is in a residential neighborhood closer to the center of the city. Inside it is a cage fashioned out of wire and metal about seven feet high, seven feet wide and four feet deep, set against a brick wall in a corner. Within the cage was a discarded I.V. bag, an empty bag of potato chips and a fluorescent light.

On Sunday, two Marine officers stood in front of the cage and held up a photograph of Mr. Bigley, who was videotaped in a similar cage before he was decapitated last month. One officer said the cages did not appear to match. Others who were present, though, said the evidence recovered earlier at least suggested that people had been kept in the cage.

In a windowless room nearby, there was a fingerprint on the wall, in what looked like dried blood. Near it was the word "hope," written on the wall in Arabic letters. Also on the wall were the words for "put," "kept," "plan" and "to pass on," in no intelligible order, according to an Army translator.

In another room, a piece of wire hung from the ceiling. Verses from the Koran were scrawled on walls in several places. Children's clothing, pictures and a child's pink bicycle were heaped into a corner, as though squatters had moved in and pushed aside the inhabitants' belongings.

Thin mattresses and frying pans with scraps of food in them were on the floor. By the window, covered with curtains fashioned from detergent sacks stitched together, was a box of onions, still fresh. Two houses away was the makeshift chemical lab, where plastic bags of powder with Arabic labels sat on a shelf. Across the room were several rubber gloves and bottles of chemicals. A grenade sat upright on the table, its detonator removed. One plastic bag of pale powdery substance was labeled TNT. A faint chemical odor hung in the air.

Chief Warrant Officer Lee Fair of the First Battalion, Eighth Marines, said another room held evidence that someone had been mixing chemicals to make a "blood agent," a highly toxic compound. There were also blasting caps, apparently to spread the agent through explosives, he said.

"Anyone that knew what they were doing could put those things together and make something very dangerous," he said.

This article was reported by Robert F. Worth in Falluja and written by James Glanz in Baghdad.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/22/international/middleeast/22falluja.html?oref=login&hp>

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Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Tuesday, November 23, 2004

FBI asks pilots of crop dusters to watch out

Attack is possible, authorities say

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND -- Federal authorities are asking crop duster pilots across Oregon to keep a sharp eye out for anything out of the ordinary.

Authorities think al-Qaida may be interested in using small planes to launch a biological or chemical attack in the United States.

"We have an interest in what we believe the bad guys have an interest in, and we believe the bad guys still have an interest in aircraft," said Robert Jordan, the FBI's top agent in Oregon. "And agricultural aircraft has the unique ability to aerate chemicals and spread them over an area, and that has some ominous consequences, depending on who is being sprayed."

Oregon crop duster pilots say they are getting used to stepped-up scrutiny from federal law enforcement officials, who first began asking about the planes immediately after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Wayne Seitz, who runs a crop dusting business in Heppner, said the FBI dropped in last month to see how things were going, and that for him, it is reassuring to know that the FBI is checking up on businesses.

He's also recently been visited by the Federal Aviation Administration.

Seitz said the agency wanted to make sure his plane was secure when he wasn't using it.

Jordan said the FBI will probably be keeping a close eye on agricultural aircraft for some time.

"I don't anticipate us losing our interest in that type of industry in the foreseeable future," he said.

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/local/200773_cropdusters23.html?source=rss

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USA Today

November 23, 2004

Pg. 6

Bush: Verify Iran's Claims Of Halting Uranium Program

President visits Colombia, lauds its crackdown on drugs

By Judy Keen, USA Today

CARTAGENA, Colombia — President Bush said he hopes Iran has stopped its uranium-enrichment programs, as it claimed on Monday. "Let's say I hope it's true," he said.

"I think the definition of truth is the willingness of the Iranian regime to allow for verification," he added.

At a news conference here with Colombian President Alvaro Uribe as he wrapped up a three-day trip to Latin America, Bush left little doubt that he is skeptical of Iran's assertion, which will be investigated by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran announced Monday that it had frozen all uranium enrichment programs, weakening a U.S. effort to refer its suspect nuclear activities to the United Nations Security Council. The claim was welcomed by Europe and

cautiously endorsed by the IAEA, the U.N. atomic watchdog. But even if verified, such a freeze falls short of European and U.S. hopes for an Iranian commitment to scrap its plans to enrich uranium.

"They have said some things in the past, and it's very important for them to verify and earn the trust of those of us who are worried about them developing a nuclear weapon," Bush said, perspiring under a sweltering sun. "It looks like there is some progress, but to determine whether the progress is real, there must be verification."

The head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, said his agency was likely to rule by Thursday on whether Iran had honored its commitment. The Bush administration will wait until that ruling before deciding whether to ask the U.N. Security Council to sanction Iran for its nuclear activities.

Iran has said the suspension would be temporary and insists that it has the right to enrich uranium. It says it is not aiming to make weapons but it is interested only in generating nuclear power.

Bush stopped here on his way to Texas from a Pacific Rim summit in Santiago, Chile, to highlight Colombia's success in fighting drug cartels and Marxist rebels who feed off the drug trade, and to celebrate trade between the two countries. Since 2003, trade has increased \$1 billion to \$11.2 billion.

Colombia is the source of 90% of the cocaine consumed in the USA. Over the past four years, the Bush administration has spent \$3 billion to help Colombia eradicate coca production. For the second year in a row, production dropped 20% this year.

The crackdown has pushed the rebels deeper into their jungle strongholds, cut crime rates in most major cities and given Colombians a renewed sense of hope after 40 years of civil war.

"The drug traffickers who practice violence and intimidation in this country send their addictive and deadly products to the United States," Bush said. "Defeating them is vital to the safety of our peoples and to the stability of this hemisphere."

"This war against narco-terrorism can and will be won, and Colombia is well on its way to that victory," he said.

The meeting, at Uribe's presidential retreat on an island outside the 400-year-old port city, was held under extraordinary security. Colombia deployed 15,000 security forces and halted alcohol sales for 24 hours. Battleships and two submarines were offshore. Two helicopters hovered above Bush's motorcade as it raced between the airport and the presidential compound. Uribe has been the target of several assassination attempts, including a rocket attack on the day he was inaugurated in 2002.

The Colombian government expressed hope that Bush's trip would encourage Americans to visit. After the news conference, Uribe visited the building where American reporters were working to thank them for coming. Orlando Cabrera, a Colombian who was the starting shortstop for the world champion Boston Red Sox, also visited reporters. So did a fictional Colombian hero: Juan Valdez, complete with donkey, who pitches Colombian coffee in TV commercials.

http://www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20041123/a_bush23.art.htm

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Washington Post
November 23, 2004
Pg. 6

Funds For Atomic Bomb Research Cut From Spending Bill

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

Congress has eliminated the financing of research supported by President Bush into a new generation of nuclear weapons, including investigations into low-yield atomic bombs and an earth-penetrating warhead that could destroy weapons bunkers deep underground.

The Bush administration called in 2002 for exploring new nuclear weapons that could deter a wide range of threats, including possible development of a warhead that could go after hardened, deeply buried targets, or lower-power bombs that could be used to destroy chemical or biological stockpiles without contaminating a wide area.

But research on those programs was dropped from the \$388 billion government-wide spending bill adopted Saturday, a rare instance in which the Republican-controlled Congress has gone against the president. The move slowly came to light over the weekend as details of the extensive measure became clear.

Dropping the programs was praised by arms-control advocates and some members of Congress who tried unsuccessfully for several years to kill them. These opponents argued that such research by the United States could trigger a new arms race, and that the existence of lower-yield weapons -- sometimes called "mini-nukes" -- would ultimately increase the likelihood of war.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) described Saturday's result as "a consequential victory for those of us who believe the United States sends the wrong signal to the rest of the world by reopening the nuclear door."

President Bush's fiscal 2005 budget contained \$27 million to continue research on modifying two existing warheads for the earth-penetrator, or "bunker-buster," role, and it projected nearly \$500 million over the next five years should a weapon be approved.

While Feinstein and other Democrats had failed earlier this year to bar authorization of the program, it was a Republican, Rep. David L. Hobson of Ohio, who led the successful effort to keep the programs out of the omnibus appropriations bill adopted Saturday. Hobson, chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water development, oversaw dropping the money from an appropriations bill in June, and House-Senate conferees accepted that action in Saturday's bill.

The Bush administration, Hobson said yesterday, "should read this as a clear signal from Congress" that any attempt to revive the funding in next year's budget "would get the same reaction." He added that he had not heard any threat of a veto and "nobody has come to me and said we can't have this."

The action caught the administration by surprise. A spokesman for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which runs the nuclear weapons programs and the national nuclear laboratories, said the matter was under study.

"We are disappointed Congress has not followed the administration's request in several areas, and we will assess what we will do down the road," said Bryan Wilkes, the security agency's spokesman. He added that it was too early to talk about what will be in the fiscal 2006 budget that will go to Congress in January.

Also cut from the nuclear program was \$7 million for selecting a site for a \$4 billion facility that would build what are called plutonium pits, the nuclear triggers for thermonuclear warheads. Arms-control advocates had opposed the facility, arguing that with a sharp 50 percent reduction in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, a small facility operating now at Los Alamos National Laboratory could produce enough pits for the U.S. arsenal.

Hobson said he decided the research money should be deleted after visits over the past two years with scientists and managers at the nuclear labs and test sites, and after watching steps being taken by the administration to cut the nuclear stockpile and designate "smart" conventional weapons for tasks once assigned to atomic warheads.

He said that the \$9 million Bush request to study ideas for new low-yield weapons had been redirected into studies of "current technologies to make existing warheads more robust and easier to maintain without more testing."

Hobson added he had been against developing smaller-yield weapons "that someone might use," and instead wants the nuclear labs to employ modern technology to make "more reliable replacements" for the current warheads.

Rep. Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.), whose attempt to cut the new nuclear weapons program authorization in past years had failed, described what had occurred as a reversal of "the Bush administration's dangerous disregard for nuclear nonproliferation."

She noted the "growing bipartisan concern and distrust" of the administration's nuclear policies and commended Hobson "for recognizing the need to halt spending for nuclear 'bunker busters' and an arsenal of new nuclear weapons."

Hobson also received praise from Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, who said the Ohio legislator "has shown enormous courage to break ranks with the White House and apply common sense on its excessive and extreme nuclear proposals."

Kimball warned the administration to "carefully consider whether it will try to revive its controversial nuclear weapons research programs."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5554-2004Nov22.html>

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San Francisco Chronicle

November 22, 2004

Pg. 1

Experts Fear Nuke Genie's Out Of Bottle

Arms technology spreading beyond Iran, North Korea

By James Sterngold, Chronicle Staff Writer

The three-decade-old system for preventing the spread of nuclear arms may be eroding irreversibly as the spread of technology for producing weapons fuel circulates among smaller powers, experts warn, signaling that a quiet, low-scale arms race may be taking shape.

Despite occasional positive news, there are numerous ill omens. European diplomats appeared to score a success last week by persuading Iran to freeze its programs for enriching uranium, the heart of nuclear bombs. But a range of specialists said the success could prove temporary because Iran still has the know-how to transform peaceful facilities for creating reactor fuel into weapons plants. And the administration of President Bush charged over the weekend that Iran was hastily enriching a large amount of uranium before the freeze, which Iranian officials said would take effect today.

Not only do Iran and North Korea have the capability to make the fuel, the experts warn, but so do several dozen other countries -- from Brazil, Japan and South Korea to Turkey, Syria and Egypt.

As a result, after decades of nonproliferation policies based on the idea that the global community could prevent the spread of nuclear weapons by controlling nuclear materials and technology, such containment strategies may no longer be possible, these experts reluctantly agree.

The concern is that legitimate facilities, built to develop what is called the nuclear fuel cycle, could be used to increase the concentrations of enriched uranium or for processing plutonium to make weapons-grade fuel. Not only is the technology for these processes widely available to countries rich and poor, but some of the equipment needed for the job, such as high-powered computers and precision machine tools, can now be purchased easily, experts say.

Lack of faith

"Even if you take this out of the context of North Korea and Iran, at this point you have a fundamental lack of faith in the system that secured us for the past 30 years," said Jon Wolfsthal, a former U.S. nuclear inspector and now deputy director of the Nonproliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "We are ending up in the exact world we were trying to avoid for the past 30 years. Nuclear weapons are increasingly available and valuable in international affairs, and the fuel cycle issue is making it worse."

Added David Smith, a former arms-control negotiator under the first President George Bush and now chief operating officer of the National Institute for Public Policy, a conservative Washington think tank, "Maybe in some ideal world where the sky is a different color, maybe you can stop the spread, but in my world there are just too many competing interests, too much technology that is already out there. What you can do is make it more expensive, harder to do, to get the bad guys from obtaining nuclear weapons."

In a recent interview with The Chronicle, Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N.-affiliated body that has tried to halt nuclear proliferation with its monitoring and inspection system, called the widely distributed facilities for developing the fuel cycle "latent bomb plants."

"We are really headed in a really dangerous path, in my view," he said.

The numbers

"The Nuclear Tipping Point: Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear Choices," published recently by the Brookings Institution, examines in detail how many countries may be starting down this dangerous path. The book analyzes the situations in Egypt, Syria, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, looking at their incentives for turning fuel cycle or research plants into bomb plants.

Peaceful uses of nuclear facilities include energy production, medicine and research. But both inside and outside the U.S. government, many experts now call ostensibly peaceful nuclear fuel facilities "virtual nuclear arsenals," because those same programs can quickly become the heart of a weapons program.

"I think the sense that things are not going well is shared by a lot of people because of these programs," said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a leading Washington think tank on nuclear weapons issues.

Albright calls himself an optimist, believing that inspections and persuasion can still prevent wider proliferation, but, he conceded, "we've reached a point where if we don't solve some of these problems, it becomes overwhelming."

Some of these fuel cycle programs have been covert, and some in the open. Iran, for instance, had violated the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by concealing some aspects of its program to build a fuel cycle -- a uranium enrichment facility. And some opponents of the fundamentalist regime have claimed the government is still hiding weapons facilities, though they have produced no evidence so far.

But most of Iran's efforts have been done legally, and the government has said that, under the deal with the Europeans, it would only suspend, not dismantle, its fuel cycle program. Iran says its nuclear facilities are intended only for peaceful purposes, but the Bush administration has generally insisted that the program has to be permanently shut down.

It is unclear how much that would matter.

Countries of concern

Currently, nine countries -- the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea -- possess, or are suspected of possessing, nuclear weapons. ElBaradei said that within a decade or so, as many as 40 countries will have the ability to make fuel, and thus warheads. He suggested that, no matter the outcome of the deal with the Europeans, Iran has essentially crossed the nuclear weapons threshold.

"Iran has developed every aspect of the fuel cycle. ... I'm saying they have the know-how," ElBaradei said.

Most of the recent efforts by the United States, the United Nations and the major industrialized countries in halting the spread of nuclear weapons have focused on what are regarded as the key vulnerabilities -- the large, poorly guarded stocks of weapons-grade material in the former Soviet bloc countries or rogue scientists from nuclear-armed countries selling their know-how on the black market, as happened in Pakistan.

Now there is growing concern over an alternative scenario -- exploiting fuel-cycle technology.

Nearly four decades ago, the global powers agreed to a world-wide containment approach to prevent the proliferation of weapons technology. The big five powers of the Cold War era, the United States, Britain, France, the Soviet Union and China, would maintain their nuclear monopoly. In return, other countries would be given access to what at that time was regarded as peaceful nuclear technology, in the form of reactors and other facilities, so long as they were opened to international monitoring.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which took force in 1970, did appear to help prevent a rapid spread of weapons. But the seeds of today's problem were spread widely as numerous countries obtained reactors and experimented with the fuel cycle.

Newcomers

Experts worry now that some countries, fearful over the success of Iran and North Korea in enriching fuel, could push their own programs, igniting an arms race. If North Korea's bomb program is not shut down, for instance, neighboring countries with fuel cycle technology -- Taiwan, South Korea and Japan -- might take the next step and build warheads.

South Korea, which has large commercial and research programs, recently admitted that it had secretly experimented with uranium enrichment, in violation of its treaty obligations. The South Korean government said the experiments were done by scientists without official approval, but North Korea seized on the disclosures to argue that it needed to maintain its programs.

"If North Korea conducts a test and breaks into the nuclear club, and if Iran completes facilities for enriching or reprocessing, the whole set of nonproliferation constraints will unravel quickly, maybe even explode," said Graham Allison, a senior Defense Department official in the Clinton administration and author of "Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe."

During the presidential campaign, both Bush and Sen. John Kerry said in their first debate that the spread of nuclear weapons was the greatest security threat facing the United States.

In a speech last February, Bush said no new countries should be permitted to develop fuel cycle capabilities. But he has not offered any specific new policies, other than an initiative to seize illicit shipments of equipment or material on a case-by-case basis.

ElBaradei and some others have proposed the creation of a multilateral consortium that would take control of all fuel enrichment facilities, perhaps under U.N. supervision. Countries with peaceful nuclear reactors would be guaranteed access to fuel at reasonable prices, as long as it was properly monitored, but no new countries would be allowed to develop fuel cycle technology.

Many experts say a greater sense of urgency is needed. Raymond Jeanloz, a UC Berkeley physics professor who in January will become chairman of the Committee on International Security and Arms Control at the National Academy of Sciences, said the issue is a frequent topic among scientists knowledgeable about weapons programs. At the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, one of America's primary warhead design labs, the Center for Global Security Research, a think tank and advisory body, is devoting most of next year to an intensive series of forums and studies of latent proliferation.

In May, the fuel cycle problem is expected to be an important topic at a conference in New York, where the 189 signatory countries will review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and consider whether it needs to be updated.

Bush critics

Some critics of the Bush administration's record have insisted that the United States needs to play a more active role in trying to halt fuel cycle programs, in Iran and elsewhere. For instance, the administration has raised no objections to Brazil building an active fuel cycle, which it says is for commercial and peaceful purposes, even though that country has resisted opening all its facilities to full inspections by ElBaradei's agency.

The United States has said that since Brazil is regarded as a friendly and peaceful country, the program is not dangerous. But critics say the Bush administration has to be more consistent and treat all such programs as a threat.

"In the end, the big loser in all of this is the U.S.," since nuclear weapons are the only devices that can defeat America's overwhelming conventional military superiority, said Wolfsthal of the Nonproliferation Project.

"Fifteen to 20 more countries could develop this technology in a decade," he said. "It's disturbing, almost horrifying, but not unrealistic."

Some conservatives argue that it is already too late. The United States needs to focus, therefore, on stamping out programs only in the hands of perceived foes -- for example, Iran, Libya and North Korea -- and not worry about allies and friends.

"There's no answer, no solution that's practical," said Fred Ikle, for years a senior arms control negotiator and a well-known neoconservative. "It's hard to get the horses back in the barn. One should work to slow it down as much as possible. That's all you can do."

NUCLEAR WEAPONS ACROSS THE GLOBE

Nine countries have acknowledged or suspected nuclear weapons programs. Others, including some nations that have abandoned their weapons programs, are suspected of maintaining nuclear fuel cycles — that is, the capability to produce nuclear fuel that could be used for peaceful purposes or be further processed for nuclear weapons.

Countries with confirmed nuclear weapons:

United States: 10,500 nuclear warheads

Russia: 20,000 warheads, half of which are deployed

China: 400 warheads

France: 450 warheads

Britain: 185 warheads

India: 65 warheads

Pakistan: 30-50 warheads. The head of its nuclear weapons program was fired in February for secretly supplying nuclear technology to North Korea, Libya and Iran..

Countries with unconfirmed nuclear weapons

Israel: 110-190 (projected number) warheads; has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

North Korea: 2-9 (projected number) warheads; announced its withdrawal from NPT in January 2003..

Countries reported to be pursuing development of nuclear programs

Algeria, Syria: Suspected intentions to produce nuclear weapons, but no nuclear weapons programs have been identified.

Iran: Suspected of pursuing uranium enrichment and nuclear weapons programs since the 1970s. After disclosures by opponents of the regime, Iran admitted to having secret centrifuge facilities for producing highly enriched uranium, and last week agreed to freeze its enrichment program, at least temporarily, while negotiations continue..

Countries that have disbanded nuclear weapons programs

Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan: Inherited nuclear weapons at the breakup of the Soviet Union, but returned the weapons to Russia and signed the NPT as nonnuclear weapons states.

Argentina: Admitted only that it conducted unsafeguarded uranium enrichment and reprocessing.

Australia, Egypt: Ended their programs before they signed the NPT.

Brazil: Ended weapons program before 1970. Admits having a nuclear fuel cycle, but has resisted allowing U.N. nuclear weapons inspectors broader access to its nuclear facilities.

Iraq: Nuclear weapons program started in the early 1970s, but was effectively halted in 1991 by Security Council-mandated inspections. In 1998, Saddam Hussein refused to allow inspections to continue and was suspected of resuming a nuclear weapons program. But the final report by U.S. weapons inspectors, released in October, said Iraq did not have such a program at the time of the U.S. invasion in March 2003.

Libya: Agreed in December 2003 to abandon its nuclear program, including centrifuges and bomb designs provided by a rogue Pakistani scientist. It disclosed its history of trying to build the nuclear fuel cycle in return for a promise that Western countries would lift trade sanctions.

Romania: Former Warsaw Pact country once had a plutonium separation program.

South Africa: Abandoned its program before it signed the NPT in 1991, but maintains stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium under International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.

South Korea: Program ended after 1970. Disclosed recently that its scientists had secretly conducted a plutonium-based experiment in 1982 and a uranium enrichment project in 2000.

Spain: May have had an unacknowledged nuclear weapons program under the previous military dictatorship.

Sweden: Had a program that was essentially ended by the time it signed the NPT.

Taiwan: Ended its program after 1970.

Yugoslavia: The former communist government had a program that was ended after 1970.

Sources: Nuclear Threat Initiative; Center for Defense Information; Monterey Institute for International Studies; "Global Nuclear Stockpiles, 1945-2000," by Robert Norris and William Arkin; Institute for Science and International Security; Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, March/April 2000; BBC News; United Nations (disarmament.un.org); additional research by Chronicle librarian Lois Jermyn

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2004/11/22/MNGQR9VIMH1.DTL>

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Washington Times

November 24, 2004

Pg. 1

N. Koreans Detail Deadly Experiments On Prisoners

By Jeremy Kirk, The Washington Times

SEOUL — North Korean scientists are said to have conducted lethal gas experiments on political prisoners in the 1970s that were still happening as recently as 2002.

In 10 hours of interviews Monday, three North Koreans detailed chilling experiments in which prisoners were placed in glass chambers and exposed to chemicals that killed them within hours, said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights group based in Los Angeles.

Mr. Cooper said the accounts came from North Koreans now living in South Korea and who purportedly were involved in the experiments.

"The openness and the specificity of the description of these murders was quite remarkable," Mr. Cooper said. "On the other hand, the lack of any inkling of remorse on the part of the individuals decades later — this kind of action I found to be quite shocking.

"The attitude of the scientists ... was these were political prisoners, they were as good as dead anyway, and therefore, utilizing them for experiments held really no moral implications whatsoever."

Mr. Cooper said the interviews were arranged by other human rights activists in Seoul, not by the South Korean government.

None of the three North Koreans were present at the press conference, and few other details were released about them.

In a meeting later with South Korean Foreign Ministry officials, Mr. Cooper said, "there was absolutely no attempt to deny these kinds of activities on the part of the South Korean official I met. He did say it was unfortunate."

Mr. Cooper detailed an account from a 31-year-old North Korean chemist who said he was involved in one of two parallel groups involved in experiments.

The chemist's group experimented on animals, and recorded data on a chart.

The defector told Mr. Cooper that if the experiments were successful, "we then turned over the results to our colleagues, and they were experimenting on human guinea pigs."

Two of the North Koreans Mr. Cooper spoke with were sources for two presentations by the British Broadcasting Corp. (BBC) earlier this year.

Those programs featured interviews with North Koreans who said chemical experiments were conducted on humans, as well as documents that were said to have been smuggled from inside the country.

Pyongyang denied the reports.

The experiments are on a different scale and for different reasons than those of the Nazis, Mr. Cooper said. But the reports underscore the importance of incorporating human rights issues into discussions with North Korea, he said. South Korea has avoided direct confrontation with North Korea on human rights issues. The North Korean Human Rights Act, signed into law in October by President Bush, was criticized by several members of the ruling Uri Party, who saw the measure as antagonistic and a threat to reconciliation between the Koreas at a time when economic cooperation is increasing.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20041124-121316-5086r.htm>

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(Editor's Note: Hyperlink for referenced report follows article.)

New York Times

November 24, 2004

C.I.A. Says Pakistanis Gave Iran Nuclear Aid

By Douglas Jehl

WASHINGTON, Nov. 23 - A new report from the Central Intelligence Agency says the arms trafficking network led by the Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan provided Iran's nuclear program with "significant assistance," including the designs for "advanced and efficient" weapons components.

The unclassified version of the report, posted Tuesday on the agency's Web site, www.cia.gov, does not say explicitly whether Mr. Khan's network sold Iran complete plans for building a warhead, as the network is known to have done for Libya and perhaps North Korea. But it suggests that American intelligence agencies now believe that the bomb-making designs provided by the network to Iran in the 1990's were more significant than the United States government has previously disclosed.

In a recent closed-door speech to a private group, George J. Tenet, the former director of central intelligence, described Mr. Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, as being "at least as dangerous as Osama bin Laden" because of his role in providing nuclear technology to other countries. A tape recording of the speech was obtained by The New York Times.

Until now, in discussing Iran's nuclear program, American officials have referred publicly only to the Khan network's role in supplying designs for older Pakistani centrifuges used to enrich uranium. But American officials have also suspected that the Khan network provided Iran with a warhead design as well.

The C.I.A. report is the first to assert that the designs provided to Iran also included those for weapons "components."

The report to Congress is an annual update, required by law, on countries' acquisition of illicit weapons technology. The posting of the unclassified version on the agency's Web site comes two days before a meeting in Vienna of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear monitoring group, is scheduled to review the status of Iran's weapons program.

The "Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions" is the first to be issued by the agency since November. Its focus is the period from July to December 2003, but it also discusses broader trends.

It does not mention what Secretary of State Colin L. Powell described last week as new intelligence about Iran's nuclear program, linking the country's missile program to its effort to find a way to deliver atomic weapons.

The report says the agency remains convinced that the Iran is pursuing a clandestine weapons program, despite claims to the contrary by the Tehran government. It says Iran's stated willingness to allow inspections by the I.A.E.A. is likely to prevent Tehran from using its declared nuclear sites to produce weapons, but warns that it might use covert facilities for those purposes.

The warhead design provided to Libya by the Khan network was for an aging, crude Chinese model. Such a design would nevertheless provide Iran with important assistance in what American officials say is its quest to develop nuclear weapons, a goal they say Tehran could reach in the next several years.

The C.I.A. began to infiltrate Mr. Khan's network in the late 1990's, according to the account Mr. Tenet is now spelling out in his speeches. That operation led to the unraveling of the network's ties to Libya and the unmasking last year of Libya's illicit weapons program.

Mr. Khan remains in Pakistan, where he was pardoned last year by President Pervez Musharraf. Libya turned over the design to the United States early this year, and it is now being examined at the Department of Energy, the custodian of the American nuclear arsenal.

But American intelligence agencies are still pursuing questions about the extent of the role the Khan network played in providing assistance to North Korea, Iran and perhaps other customers. A recent report by the I.A.E.A. noted "several common elements" between Iran's nuclear program and Libya's, which is being dismantled.

Mr. Khan directed Pakistan's uranium enrichment program for 25 years. His role as an illicit supplier of nuclear technology had been widely rumored, but was made public only late last year, when the United States and Britain reached an agreement with Libya that made public the extent of the Libyan weapons program.

In recent paid speeches, Mr. Tenet has given new details about the C.I.A.'s role in unraveling the Khan network, according to people who attended the sessions. The speeches to private groups have been delivered on ground rules that they remain off the record, but a tape recording of a speech given in Georgia in September was provided to The Times by someone who was there.

In that speech, Mr. Tenet said that the C.I.A.'s role had stretched back to 1997, and that he had kept it secret in the government from everyone but President Bill Clinton and President Bush. Describing a "hidden network that stretched across three continents," he said: "Working with British colleagues, we pieced together his subsidiaries, his clients, his front companies, his finances and manufacturing plants. We were inside his residence, inside his facilities, inside his rooms. We were everywhere these people were."

Mr. Tenet called the agency's role "one of the greatest success stories nobody ever talks about."

A classified version of the C.I.A. report has been provided to Congressional intelligence committees, administration officials said. The unclassified version refers only obliquely to several delicate subjects, including what American officials believe has been North Korea's recent success in building as many as a half-dozen additional nuclear weapons from plutonium extracted from spent fuel rods.

The document restates longstanding concerns that outside experts, including a Pakistani nuclear engineer, may have provided assistance to Al Qaeda as part of its quest to acquire nuclear weapons. "One of our highest concerns is Al Qaeda's stated readiness to attempt unconventional attacks against us," the report says.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/24/politics/24weapons.html?oref=login>

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Central Intelligence Agency
Attachment A

Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology

Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions,

1 July Through 31 December 2003

http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/721_reports/july_dec2003.htm

(PDF Version)

http://www.cia.gov/cia/reports/721_reports/pdfs/721report_july_dec2003.pdf

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Los Angeles Times

November 24, 2004

Libya Says Compliance Rewards Have Been Few

By Reuters

PARIS — Libyan leader Moammar Kadafi said Tuesday that his country had been poorly rewarded for pledging to renounce nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and that other countries had little incentive to follow suit. Last December, Libya pledged to abandon the weapons, ending its international isolation. Kadafi told the French newspaper Le Figaro he was disappointed that the United States, Europe and Japan had not given Libya more security guarantees in return.

"If we are not recompensed, other countries will not follow our example and dismantle their programs," Kadafi said on the eve of a two-day visit to Libya by French President Jacques Chirac. The interview is to be published in Le Figaro today.

Kadafi, who has patched up relations with Europe and the United States after decades of hostility, said Libya should receive "peaceful technology."

The European Union agreed in September to lift all sanctions on Libya, just days after Washington revoked a broad trade embargo.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-libya24nov24,1,4905205.story>

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