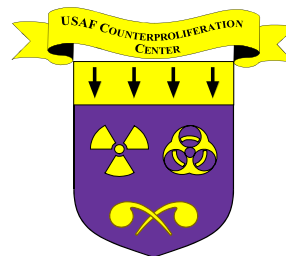


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U.S. Backs Direct Talks With N. Korea

Shift Aims to Ease Nuclear Standoff

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration said yesterday that it would agree to direct talks with North Korea on how the isolated state could meet its nuclear obligations, a subtle shift in position designed to give both sides a face-saving way to resolve the standoff over North Korea's weapons programs.

In a statement issued after a meeting in Washington with Japanese and South Korean diplomats, the State Department stressed that the talks would not be a negotiation and that "the United States will not provide quid pro quos to North Korea to live up to its existing obligations" to shut down its nuclear programs. Even so, the statement suggested that the administration is eager to find a way out of the diplomatic box created by its uncompromising stance on striking a deal with the North Korean government.

The North Koreans have demanded direct talks with the United States -- a position supported by other countries in the region, especially South Korea.

Throughout the crisis over North Korea's admission that it has a secret weapons program and its push to restart a shuttered nuclear facility, U.S. officials have secretly engaged in indirect talks with the North Korean government. These talks have taken place either through quasi-official meetings by former U.S. officials or low-level meetings in unofficial venues, such as Hong Kong. The significance of yesterday's announcement, one official said, is that the administration believes the moment has come to provide "clarity [to the North Koreans] in more formalized talks." State Department officials, moreover, have also worked out options on how to proceed with discussions -- including what incentives to offer the North Koreans -- if the Pyongyang government responds positively.

The announcement came after North Korea issued a warning of war if the United States and its allies impose economic sanctions in response to North Korea's ouster of international inspectors and restarting of the nuclear facility. "Sanctions mean a war," said a statement released by the official Korean Central News Agency. "The war knows no mercy."

The International Atomic Energy Agency voted Monday to give North Korea "one last chance" before referring the matter to the United Nations Security Council, which could levy sanctions.

U.S. officials emphasized that the administration has never ruled out talks with North Korea. "What we've ruled out is negotiating again for obligations that North Korea made and needs to abide by," said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. "That remains the case today."

"Depending on what they said, we might talk back," another official said, but added that Pyongyang should not expect the discussion at first to include a renewal of fuel oil deliveries or other demands it has sought. The administration cut off the deliveries after North Korea admitted in October to having a secret weapons program, and North Korea responded by evicting the inspectors and restarting a plutonium reactor that had been shut down as part of a 1994 accord.

The administration has long struggled with its North Korean policy, which has spawned fierce disputes between those counseling engagement and those pushing for isolation of the Stalinist state. Officials said the disagreements often resulted in no policy.

South Korea, in particular, has moved into the breach and embarked on an intensive round of worldwide diplomacy to bring the two sides back from the brink. Last week, the country sent officials to talk with counterparts in Beijing and Moscow. On Friday, a South Korean is scheduled to visit Tokyo for similar talks with the Japanese government. In a letter to Condoleezza Rice, President Bush's national security adviser, Senate Minority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) and two senior Democrats -- Sens. Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware and Carl M. Levin of Michigan -- requested that Rice brief the Senate this week "to clear up the confusion about the goals and focus of U.S. policy." The letter, released yesterday, said "the administration's policy has been erratic and seems to careen from one approach to another."

Administration officials have insisted that North Korea's violation of nuclear weapons agreements was an international matter, not a dispute between the United States and North Korea. Making a round of the Sunday television talk shows Dec. 29, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell repeatedly sidestepped questions about why the administration refused to talk directly to North Korea. At one point, on NBC's "Meet The Press," Powell appeared to set conditions for direct talks.

"If the North Koreans reached out and started to make sensible statements and stopped taking actions which are, frankly, provocative and seen as provocative by the international community, we would see what might be appropriate at that point," he said.

On Monday, Bush told reporters that "we will have dialogue" with North Korea. But aides said that day that his statement did not represent a shift in policy.

Yesterday, speaking in Chicago as he announced his economic plan, Bush said North Korea "is attempting to defy the world." But he stressed again that the United States has "no hostile intent" toward North Korea and "by working with countries in the region, diplomacy will work."

In a report released yesterday, the CIA said that in the year before the United States confronted North Korea over a secret uranium enrichment program, Pyongyang was seeking "large quantities" of centrifuge-related materials that could be used in such a program.

North Korea's actions have widened a rift between South Korea and the United States over how to deal with Pyongyang, and the meetings at the State Department this week were an effort to form a unified front. The South Korean national security adviser, Yim Sung-joon, arrived in Washington yesterday for meetings with administration officials, including Rice.

Diplomats in Seoul had anticipated that Yim would present the administration with a compromise plan aimed at persuading North Korea to reverse course in exchange for security assurances from the United States. But, before departing, Yim told reporters that his discussions would involve setting "a broad framework of methodology rather than looking for a specific solution."

In the joint statement, the South Korean, Japanese and U.S. delegations stressed "that North Korea's relations with the entire international community hinge on its taking prompt and verifiable action to completely dismantle its nuclear weapons program and come into full compliance with its international nuclear commitments."

Correspondent Peter S. Goodman in Seoul contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24853-2003Jan7.html>

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Washington Post

January 8, 2003

Pg. 1

U.N. Inspectors Extend Reach With Aircraft

Mobility Enhances Element of Surprise at Iraqi Sites

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Washington Post Foreign Service

QAIM, Iraq, Jan. 7 -- Escalating their hunt for banned arms in Iraq, U.N. weapons experts used helicopters for the first time to conduct a surprise inspection today, swooping down on a sprawling fertilizer plant near the Syrian border to search for evidence that President Saddam Hussein's government has restarted programs to develop chemical weapons.

The start of air transport for the U.N. team, and eventually surveillance from the air, heightened the elements of drama, speed and intrusion in the U.N. inspections, which have shifted into high gear as the experts face a Jan. 27 deadline to deliver a progress report to the Security Council.

The inspectors, in three white Bell 212 helicopters leased by the United Nations, ascended toward the rising sun as they set out this morning for a target site about 200 miles northwest of Baghdad, the capital. They were followed by anxious Iraqi officials and a small group of journalists in two lumbering Soviet-made military transport helicopters emblazoned with Iraqi Airways insignia.

U.N. officials hope the helicopters will allow the inspectors to expand their reach and arrive at sites with little advance notice. Today's trip, to the Qaim State Company for Phosphates, a vast complex of smokestacks, chemical tanks and industrial machinery set in a barren moonscape, took about two hours by air. When nuclear weapons inspectors visited the facility last month, they had to drive for six hours from their Baghdad headquarters.

Shaving travel time is crucial to increasing the element of surprise -- reducing chances that potentially incriminating evidence could be concealed, spirited away or destroyed, according to U.N. officials and arms analysts. When inspectors depart by car, they are followed by Iraqi officials. Diplomats say they believe the officials contact likely inspection sites in the direction in which the U.N. experts are traveling, providing them with warning.

Although conversations among Iraqi officials traveling in the helicopter suggested that the Qaim site probably had about an hour's notice today, that was significantly less warning than when the nuclear experts sought to visit.

"We were taken by surprise," the factory's assistant director, Ryadh Aziz Gassin, insisted to reporters. "We didn't know until we saw the helicopters flying over the complex."

The inspectors have eight helicopters, which are parked at an Iraqi air force base in Baghdad. The arrival of the helicopters in Iraq was delayed because of U.N. requirements that several firms be allowed to bid on the contract to provide air support.

Hiro Ueki, a spokesman for the U.N. inspection operation in Iraq, would not divulge what the 13 inspectors who traveled to Qaim were searching for, other than to say that they "were obviously looking for something very specific relating to CW," or chemical weapons. The plant appeared to house vast quantities of chemicals in railroad cars and oil refinery-size tanks that appeared to be corroding. One section had a sign written in English that said: "Sulfuric Acid Complex."

Gassin said the plant, which makes phosphorous-based fertilizers distributed to farmers by the Agriculture Ministry, contains many chemicals but none used to make chemical weapons. He said the inspectors questioned staff members, visited all eight production units and took several samples.

"All the information they requested and all their queries have been answered in detail, clearly and frankly," he said. The inspection occurred "in a mild way," he said, although he noted that some of the questions "were a little bit hostile."

Gassin's reaction contrasted sharply with the indignation expressed by officials at other sites inspected in recent days. On Monday, the criticism reached a new high when Hussein accused the inspectors of engaging in "purely intelligence work" by seeking to meet with Iraqi scientists and search military facilities.

Ueki defended the inspectors' tactics, saying searches and interviews conducted so far are central to determining whether Iraq has restarted programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. "Naturally, when they inspect sites, they meet official personnel and ask a lot of questions," he said. "Those questions are part of their investigation." Before landing on a dirt strip next to the factory compound, the helicopters circled the site twice, providing a rare glimpse of the magnitude of one of the hundreds of facilities the inspectors must comb through. Encompassing several square miles, the complex had scores of structures and dozens of tanks. Rusting vehicles and oil drums were scattered about, as were all sorts of other industrial detritus.

When visiting a large compound such as Qaim, U.N. officials said, the inspectors are guided by reports compiled by their predecessors, who worked in Iraq from 1991 to 1998, and by satellite imagery, intelligence data and answers to questions they pose to plant managers. The sheer size of some sites prevents the experts from looking into every building, let alone every room or storage shed.

"There's no way to search everything," one U.N. official said. "You have to pick and choose your targets."

The helicopters may help in that process. Specialists from the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is participating in the inspections along with the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, may affix devices to the helicopters that can detect radioactive compounds, allowing large areas to be quickly scanned for possible nuclear material.

The Qaim facility has long been of interest to U.N. inspectors and U.S. officials because from 1984 to 1990 it produced a type of uranium ore called "yellow cake" that played an important role in Iraq's nuclear program. U.S. officials suspect Iraqi scientists attempted to refine the ore into weapons-grade uranium before the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

The complex was extensively damaged by U.S. airstrikes during the war, and Iraqi officials said none of the uranium-production equipment was repaired. Parts of the facility related to weapons development that were not destroyed in the war were rendered inoperable by U.N. inspectors in the 1990s, the Iraqi officials said.

Gassin said the inspectors wanted to verify the status of destroyed equipment and determine whether any uranium extraction activities have resumed. "They noticed the sites were as they were," he said. "No reconstruction has taken place. The sites were still in ruins."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A24673-2003Jan7.html>

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Today: January 08, 2003 at 5:25:29 PST

Iraq Bioweapon Report Lacks Key Answers

By DAFNA LINZER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

UNITED NATIONS (AP) -

Iraq's arms declaration fails to provide new answers to key questions on stocks of biological agents such as anthrax, the nutrients used in their production and the means to deliver them, according to U.N. officials and an Associated Press review of the dossier.

In response to many of the questions, the Iraqis enclosed photocopies of 4- and 5-year-old answers long considered insufficient by inspectors.

The biological declaration, part of a 12,000-page package the Iraqis handed over to the United Nations on Dec. 7, is virtually identical to ones submitted in 1996 and 1997, according to U.N. officials who spoke on condition of anonymity. The earlier declarations were rejected by inspectors as "deficient in all areas."

The only differences between the previous reports and the new one, the inspectors said, related to equipment now being used in civilian areas.

Hans Blix, the chief U.N. weapons inspector, has said he plans to confront the Iraqis about unanswered questions in Baghdad next week. He is also expected to raise the matter in the Security Council on Thursday, when he provides his second assessment of the Iraqi declaration.

Inspectors had hoped the Iraqi declaration - which also includes sections on chemical, nuclear and missile programs - would address hundreds of questions that inspectors outlined in a January 1999 report to the Security Council.

According to the 1999 report, Iraq had failed to account for thousands of pounds of nutrients needed to produce anthrax, as well as materials used in the production of mustard gas and aflatoxin.

One weapons inspector who serves under Blix and also worked for the previous inspections regime, which ended in 1998, said anthrax remains the No. 1 concern for the biological weapons teams. "They could have provided new answers, new information, but they didn't," the inspector said.

"During the last round of inspections we found more anthrax-filled warheads than they had declared. We found seven and they declared five, so material had to be produced to make seven and they still haven't told us where that is," the inspector said.

According to U.N. Resolution 1441, crafted by the Bush administration and approved by the Security Council on Nov. 8, any omissions or false statements in Iraq's declaration, coupled with a failure to cooperate with inspectors, could open the way for military action against Saddam Hussein's regime.

Secretary of State Colin Powell has already said, based on an early assessment of the declaration, that Iraq is in "material breach" of its obligations under the resolution.

Baghdad claims it hasn't been working on weapons of mass destruction since the 1991 Gulf War. A submission of anything new would have contradicted that claim.

A team of weapons analysts on the 30th floor of U.N. headquarters in New York have been poring over several thousand pages in the biological declaration and comparing it to earlier, incomplete submissions, which were a source of intense frustration for the previous inspection regime.

The AP reviewed Iraq's 1996 biological declaration and the 2002 dossier and found them to be virtually identical although the new report includes information Iraq provided in 1997 and 1998 in response to inspectors' questions. Neither report has been made public.

For the first four years of inspections, which began at the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Iraq denied it had a biological weapons program. Only in the face of irrefutable evidence gathered by inspectors, did Baghdad finally acknowledge the program in 1995, but inspectors were often unable to verify Iraq's claims then to have destroyed its program.

"There were a lot of unanswered questions about the material balance and the types and quantities of agents they had produced," said Jonathan Tucker, a former biological weapons inspector. "Even though Iraq claimed to have eliminated its biological program in '91, there was evidence, even while inspectors were operating in the country, that it continued to develop capabilities for that program," he said.

Soon after U.N. inspectors left Baghdad in December 1998 ahead of U.S. and British airstrikes to punish the Iraqi government for its lack of cooperation, former chief weapons inspector Richard Butler produced a 280-page report on Iraq's disarmament.

Butler said inspectors remained strongly convinced that Baghdad had documents that would reveal "the full picture" of its weapons programs - but had refused to hand them over.

But Iraq claims in its latest report that it has no such documents and can only reconstruct events based on the memories of those involved in the program. In some cases, the Iraqis wrote there was no way to provide fuller answers since they had unilaterally destroyed all the evidence and the documents related to the biological weapons program, which they claim ended after the Gulf War.

The Butler report cites Iraq's failures to account for all stocks of biological agents and the nutrients used in their production. Inspectors said, for example, that they believe Iraq produced three times the amount of anthrax and 16 times more gas gangrene than Baghdad declared.

Butler's report, submitted to the Security Council in January 1999, concluded that Iraq's declaration had been "deficient in all areas."

Another U.N. official said inspectors were surprised that the Iraqis "didn't even make an effort to make the answers look new. It's the same old stuff."

For example, many of the answers are addressed to Butler's inspections regime, known as UNSCOM, rather than to Blix's U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection team, which uses the acronym UNMOVIC.

In one section, Iraq claims that it has destroyed all records of any tests it conducted with biological weapons.

"Therefore any discrepancies found between the accounts given in this declaration and the reports and visual records are entirely due to failure of recollecting exact details rather than withholding information, contrary to what UNSCOM may seem to think," the declaration said.

An international panel that made recommendations to the Security Council on Iraq's disarmament in March 1999 said "critical gaps" in Iraq's biological program "need to be filled to arrive at a reasonably complete picture."

It noted that biological warfare agents can be produced using simple equipment and Iraq possesses the capability and knowledge to make them "quickly and in volume."

The panel said Iraq needs to account for 500 R-400 aerial bombs equipped for chemical and biological agents, for 550 artillery shells filled with mustard gas that it claimed to have lost shortly after the Gulf War, and for its military plans to use the deadly nerve agent VX.

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/w-me/2003/jan/08/010809595.html>

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

Washington Times

January 8, 2003

Pg. 3

CIA Says N. Korea Tried To Buy Nuclear Gear In 2001

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

North Korea tried to buy large amounts of equipment for a uranium-weapons program in 2001 and also purchased missile-related goods from communist China, according to a CIA report.

The CIA report to Congress on arms proliferation for the period of July 2001 to December 2001 said, "Pyongyang has continued attempts to procure technology worldwide" for a nuclear-arms program.

The report, made public yesterday, also identified Russia, China and North Korea as major suppliers of chemical, biological and nuclear-arms goods and missile systems to rouge states or unstable regions.

For example, the report states that Chinese companies in 2001 supplied Pakistan with technical assistance for its short-range missiles and its medium-range Shaheen II missile.

The Chinese missile assistance contradicted China's pledge in November 2001 "not to assist, in any way, any country in the development of ballistic missiles that could be used to deliver nuclear weapons."

"In addition, firms in China have provided dual-use missile-related items, raw materials and-or assistance to several countries of proliferation concern — such as Iran, North Korea and Libya," the report said.

The Bush administration has imposed economic sanctions on China three times in recent months for missile and arms sales to Pakistan and Iran.

Regarding North Korea, the report stated that Pyongyang exported "significant ballistic missile-related equipment, components, materials and technical expertise to the Middle East, South Asia and North Africa."

North Korea disclosed to U.S. officials in October that it had been secretly building a uranium-enrichment program for nuclear bombs, in violation of several agreements including a 1994 accord to freeze an earlier plutonium-based nuclear-arms program.

"The North has been seeking centrifuge-related materials in large quantities to support a uranium enrichment program," the report said of the late 2001 activity. "It also obtained equipment suitable for use in uranium feed and withdrawal systems."

Regarding missile development, the North Koreans also purchased raw materials and components for missiles, "especially through North Korean firms based in China," the report said.

North Korea also concluded a defense agreement with Russia in 2001 that will pave the way for arms sales and weapons-technology transfers to North Korea, the report said.

The report noted that North Korea has enough nuclear arms fuel for "at least one and possibly two, nuclear weapons. Spent fuel rods from a reactor also contain enough plutonium for several more weapons, the agency report said.

North Korea touched off a crisis over its nuclear arms by announcing last year that it would restart a nuclear reactor that was shut down under the 1994 agreement.

Regarding Iran, the report said that Russia and China have been supplying Tehran with nuclear-related equipment that will boost Iran's capability to build nuclear weapons.

The report said the United States "is convinced that Tehran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program" despite claims by Iran that its nuclear program is aimed at producing electricity.

On Iraq, the CIA provided new details of Baghdad's efforts to build medium-range missiles. Iraq has built two new facilities that will make solid fuel for missiles, including one site that the CIA believes is an indication that longer-range missiles are being developed.

Iraq's al Mamoun plant appears solely designed for making solid fuel used for long-range missiles, and at the same building Iraq is rebuilding a rocket motor factory, the report said.

The report also said, "Iraq probably retains a small, covert force of Scud ballistic missiles, launchers, and conventional, chemical, and biological warheads."

The Iraqis also have rebuilt chemical facilities and attempted to purchase items that have military applications by claiming the purchases are for civilian use, the report said.

Iraq also worked on biological arms in late 2001 and carried out research to improve its biological arms, the report said.

"In light of Iraq's growing industrial self-sufficiency and the likely availability of mobile or covert facilities, we are concerned that Iraq may again be producing [biological warfare] agents," the CIA said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030108-34049740.htm>

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CIA

January 7 - Posted

Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 July Through 31 December 2001

http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/bian/bian_jan_2003.htm

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Posted 1/7/2003 2:16 PM

Updated 1/7/2003 2:14 PM

Al-Qaeda's biowarfare program more advanced than previously thought

WASHINGTON (AP) — Discoveries in Afghanistan show that al-Qaeda's research into biological weapons was more advanced than previously estimated by the United States, a new intelligence report says.

While terrorists still prefer conventional bombs and other traditional methods of attack, they are becoming increasingly interested in using poisons, disease weapons and other biological weapons, the U.S. report says.

"Nonstate actors are becoming more interested in the potential of using biological warfare as a relatively inexpensive way to inflict serious damage," it warns. The report provides few specifics as evidence.

Traces of anthrax were found in labs in Afghanistan, U.S. officials have said. In addition, an Islamic extremist group with ties to al-Qaeda in northern Iraq appears to have conducted some tests with ricin, a simple poison extracted from castor beans.

"Documents and equipment recovered from al-Qaeda facilities in Afghanistan show that bin Laden has a more sophisticated biological weapons research program than previously discovered," says the report.

The unclassified report was submitted by CIA Director George J. Tenet to Congress late last month, almost six months after it was due. It covers various countries' advances in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, long-range missiles and high-tech conventional weapons, in late 2001.

It repeats charges leveled in earlier reports, saying that Iran, North Korea and Iraq have clandestine programs to develop such weapons, but it contains few new specifics.

In addition, the report says Libya tried to covertly acquire technical information on nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The report also notes that Israel is expanding its cooperation with India, negotiating deals on several high-tech conventional weapons systems, including airborne early warning radars, tactical missile defenses, and drones. http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2003-01-07-alqaeda-bioterror_x.htm

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Insight Magazine
January 21, 2003

Clinton Ignored Kim Jong-il's Nukes

By Scott Wheeler

North Korea's expulsion of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the removal of IAEA monitoring devices and the startup of plutonium-producing operations at its Yongbyon nuclear facility have been cited by Bush administration critics as the result of allegedly bellicose rhetoric by President George W. Bush. But according to documents obtained by Insight, and confirmed by highly placed sources, North Korea already had operational nuclear devices in 1994 when the Clinton administration signed its controversial "oil-for-peace" agreement.

Indeed, North Korea had no intention of abiding by the so-called "Agreed Framework" prohibiting it from developing nuclear weapons that it signed with the Clinton administration in 1994. One report drafted during negotiations for the Agreed Framework states that "North Korea already has close to 10 operational nuclear warheads for its ballistic missiles and two nuclear devices that can be carried by truck or transport plane." This evidence, from reports based mainly on North Korean defectors, raises new questions about the effectiveness of entering an agreement intended to prevent North Korea from gaining access to nuclear weapons. It also raises the foreign-policy stakes for the Bush administration as it attempts to defuse the situation.

Publicly, experts disagree about the state of the North Korean nuclear-weapons program. Some estimates indicate that the Kim Jong-il regime could have a nuclear bomb within one year; others say it already has two. However, the U.S. House of Representatives Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare (TFTUW) issued a report in August 1994 that said of the Agreed Framework, "Washington is buying time while maintaining the charade that the DPRK [North Korea] does not have nuclear weapons. Consequently, the United States and its allies have settled into the 'do-nothing-for-now' mode, merely postponing the hour of reckoning."

The most recent day of reckoning occurred in October when Pyongyang admitted to having a nuclear-weapons program after being confronted by the Bush administration with evidence that it had been working on an enriched-uranium project since 1998. This was in violation of the Agreed Framework, which had been put in place in 1994 following a similar crisis in 1993. The framework was to provide North Korea with oil and assistance in building two light-water nuclear reactors for domestic-energy needs in exchange for Pyongyang shutting down the plutonium plant in Yongbyon.

The TFTUW report says the deal was based on the false assumption that shutting down the Yongbyon plant would end the threat of North Korea possessing nuclear weapons: "Analysis has centered on determining just how much plutonium North Korea has extracted from its 5 megawatt reactor in Yongbyon. Washington insists that there is no verifiable evidence that plutonium was extracted on any other than one occasion in 1989. Therefore, according to the United States, the DPRK cannot possibly have the plutonium needed for nuclear weapons."

At the time, North Korea was a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and subject to inspections by the IAEA. Yet the 1994 TFTUW report stated that, "Since June of 1992, activities have intensified in the DPRK's primary nuclear-weapons site at Yongbyon -- an elaborate underground complex called Building 500. Pyongyang has argued that the building is merely a nuclear-waste-storage site." In 1993, when IAEA inspectors requested access to Building 500, "the DPRK not only refused, but announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty," according to the report. North Korea began fortifying the suspect complex with "40 military encampments, three air bases and a major ammunition depot, and deployed some 300 heavy anti-aircraft guns around the entire Yongbyon complex." According to the report the persistent IAEA request to inspect Building 500 provoked a bellicose response from North Korea. "The DPRK declared its now infamous semi-war state, ordering the mobilization of its armed forces."

At that time, according to the report, North Korea "canceled all IAEA inspections and began quickly removing 4,000 fuel rods from the 5 megawatt reactor in Yongbyon, making it impossible to ascertain whether or not any

plutonium had ever been removed." The TFTUW report cites North Korean defectors who "have insisted that plutonium has been extracted clandestinely over the years and used for the production of nuclear warheads." The report states that sources from Russia and the People's Republic of China have confirmed what the North Korean defectors told the United States and points out that North Korea's "refusal to allow any inspection and measurement of the rods ... indicate[s] that North Korea has something to hide."

It was this "nuclear crisis" that led to the 1994 Agreed Framework despite the misgivings of career analysts in the intelligence community who pointed out that the crisis was due to North Korea's decision to disregard prior agreements. A senior defense official familiar with the history of the Agreed Framework tells *Insight*, "It was an agreement that was bound to fail." To date the checkered history of that agreement is a tapestry of clues that some say should have alarmed Washington about North Korea's strategy. "They had no intention of abiding by the Agreed Framework. They outright refused to let international inspectors have access," the defense official tells *Insight* on condition that he not be identified. "There were no safeguards; the few inspections called for in the agreement were limited." According to several sources, analysis about the potential risks involved in that kind of agreement with North Korea were not welcome. "Anybody who said anything was ridiculed: 'You don't know how things work' we were told," says the Defense official.

A State Department official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, acknowledged that, "There were people who were skeptical from the beginning, but there were many more who said it was a good solution." Even though "the IAEA monitors said that North Korea was not in full compliance," the official says, the Agreed Framework did cause North Korea to "cease activities that were very dangerous." The defense official saw the suspension of activities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex as temporary: "After the aid was delivered it was obvious they would violate the agreement." The defense official indicated the Clinton-administration approach amounted to appeasement of Pyongyang, saying it only sought to keep the situation "under control for now."

In 1998, the Clinton administration was faced with another major threat when North Korea shot a missile over Japan. Wendy Sherman, a former State Department counselor and adviser to Clinton and then-secretary of state Madeleine Albright, told a foreign-policy group that the administration had been taken by surprise at the development: "No one in this room likely needs reminding of the events of 1998, which many feared might take us quickly back to the 1993 nuclear crisis. ... North Korea launched a rocket that overflew Japan. While an unsuccessful launching of a satellite, our experts were stunned ... holding out the specter of North Korean long-range missile capability."

Yossef Bodansky, director of the TFTUW, was not stunned; his 1994 report foretold of the crisis: "The North Korean threat to the United States will only continue to rise simply because by the mid- to late 1990s, DPRK will be able to field the ... No Dong X ICBM, which is capable of reaching the continental United States. This fact alone will introduce a whole new dimension to the crisis in Korea."

Sherman told the United States Institute for Peace that the Clinton administration "concluded the regime was not about to collapse," and that it would have to deal with North Korean President Kim Jong-il. The TFTUW report quotes "high-level North Korean defectors," saying that the current leadership in North Korea will not give up nuclear weapons no matter how many agreements it enters into with the United States. One defector, Kang Myong-To, was quoted in the report as saying, "North Korea's nuclear development is not intended as a bargaining chip as seen by the Western world. ... [Pyongyang] sees nuclear development as the only means to maintain Kim Jong-il's regime." Bodansky tells *Insight*, "Nuclear weapons are the ultimate insurance policy of the ruling elite" in North Korea. In his new book, *The High Cost of Peace*, Bodansky points out that North Korea has a history of proliferating nuclear and missile technology to other nations hostile to the United States, such as Iran.

In his January 2001 State of the Union address, President Bush cited North Korea, along with Iran and Iraq, as being part of an "Axis of Evil," suggesting a deep suspicion of Pyongyang. According to the State Department official, "When Bush came into office he ordered a review" of the Agreed Framework that was completed in June 2001. But it wasn't until the summer of 2002 that the administration concluded North Korea was in violation of the Agreed Framework.

Scott L. Wheeler is a reporter for Insight.

<http://www.insightmag.com/news/342934.html>

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New York Times
January 8, 2003

Arrest Of Terror Suspects In London Turns Up A Deadly Toxin

By Sarah Lyall

LONDON, Jan. 7 — A small quantity of the deadly toxin Ricin was found over the weekend during an antiterrorist sweep in London in which six men were arrested on suspicion of terrorism, the police said today.

The arrests took place on Sunday morning in houses in north and east London, the police said. The suspects, who are still being questioned by the authorities, are said to include teenagers and people in their 20's and 30's, and said to be of North African origin. A woman arrested with the six men on Sunday was released without being charged.

Ricin (pronounced RICE-in), which is made from castor beans, is relatively easy to make and stockpile, experts say, and has no treatment or vaccine. It can be ground up and sprayed as an aerosol, added to food or drinks, or injected into a victim — as was the case with the Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov, who was fatally injected with a Ricin-filled hollow pellet affixed to the end of an umbrella in 1978 as he waited for a bus on Waterloo Bridge.

It is considered a likely bioterrorist agent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention puts it on its "B" list, meaning it is relatively easy to disseminate and is deemed a moderate threat. Victims typically experience a few days of flulike symptoms before, in the case of strong doses, suffering organ and immune system failure, then death. "Generally speaking, Ricin has been used by a number of groups to assassinate or attempt to assassinate various individuals," said Dr. Michael Allswede, an associate professor in the department of emergency medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Because it is not difficult to make or acquire, it is part of the standard arsenal of white supremacist groups in the United States, he said.

Dr. Allswede stressed that in small amounts, Ricin is effective only as a tool for assassination, not as a weapon of mass destruction. "If you put a thimbleful on my food and I eat it without knowing it, it could kill me," he said. "But the only way to use it for mass destruction would be through the aerosolization of a large amount, like hundreds of gallons, of the stuff."

The police said they made the arrests — a result of a joint operation between the security services and antiterrorism and Special Branch forces — after receiving information about the suspects. They seized what they called "a quantity of material and items of equipment" at a residence in Wood Green, north London. After the material was analyzed at the Defense Science and Technology Laboratories at Porton Down, "a small amount" tested positive for Ricin, they said.

In London, Prime Minister Tony Blair said the incident underscored the need for the public to be vigilant about the possibility of terrorist attacks. In recent months, the government has issued a series of alarming, nonspecific warnings of terrorist threats, saying Britain is on "the front line" in the battle against terrorism because of its strong support for the United States.

So far, no such attacks have materialized. But the country has begun to stockpile large quantities of smallpox vaccine and to inoculate its health care workers against smallpox, and the public continues to be jittery about what it might expect.

"We have previously said that London, and indeed the rest of the U.K., continues to face a range of terrorist threats from a number of different groups," the assistant commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, David Veness, said in a statement. "While our message is still, 'alert, not alarm,' we would reiterate our earlier appeals for the public to remain vigilant and aware and report anything suspicious to the police."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/08/international/europe/08LOND.html>

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Insight Magazine
January 21, 2003

Searching For 'Dirty Bombs'

By Anthony L. Kimery

For at least the second time since terrorists attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, elite U.S. counterterrorist units have been put on a heightened state of alert in response to intelligence worries that the al-Qaeda network has obtained one or more weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), including biological and/or nuclear materials.

Published reports, along with new information obtained by Insight from U.S. intelligence and military sources, point to a growing body of evidence that terrorists associated with and/or sympathetic to Osama bin Laden are planning a significant attack on U.S. soil. Also targeted are allied countries that have joined the worldwide hunt for the radical Muslim cells hell-bent on unleashing new waves of terrorist strikes.

The U.S. government's activation of antiterrorist forces comes as the FBI issued a warning Nov. 14 that a "spectacular" new terrorist attack may be forthcoming -- sooner rather than later. This alert, among others about which Insight has learned, coincides with the conclusion by top U.S. intelligence officials that bin Laden is alive and in control of a revitalized al-Qaeda network with new cells operational in the United States. Both the CIA and the National Security Agency (NSA) conducted tests of a newly surfaced audiotape featuring the international terrorist leader and concluded it is genuine. In the tape, bin Laden promised new attacks.

Concerns about possible terrorist strikes are centered not only on the United States but also on Canada. Canadian officials are worried that there might be a hotbed of terrorist cells planning attacks, as evidenced by Canadian Solicitor General Lawrence MacAulay's Sept. 3 hand-delivered directive to Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) Director Ward Elcock telling him to put the prevention of terrorists from getting their hands on a "dirty bomb" or other nuclear weapon among the highest priorities of Canada's spy service.

The CSIS increasingly has been concerned about extremist Islamic groups operating in Canada that have had dealings with known al-Qaeda operatives, including some of the 9/11 hijackers. They are mindful that terrorists have entered the United States from Canada with plans to carry out bombings.

Elsewhere, the Australian government issued an unprecedented warning to its citizens that al-Qaeda terrorists there might launch attacks within the next two months. Prime Minister John Howard made the extraordinary declaration recently that he is prepared to make pre-emptive military strikes against terrorists in neighboring Asian countries planning to attack Australia. Australian intelligence agencies also are very worried about the likelihood of an al-Qaeda attack using nuclear weapons.

The FBI's latest warnings are unusually dire. They state that bin Laden's terrorist organization may be planning an unprecedented attack to cause "mass casualties, severe damage to the U.S. economy and maximum psychological trauma" on a scale far greater than the attacks on the World Trade Center's twin towers and the Pentagon.

Senior U.S. intelligence analysts who spoke to Insight say they fear such an attack would involve a nuclear device. They say a nuclear dirty bomb is the ideal weapon to accomplish the magnitude of carnage and mayhem of which the FBI has warned. They point to intelligence that indicates a nuclear weapon of some sort already may be in the hands of al-Qaeda, which has or is attempting to deliver the device or devices to terrorists operating here.

"To me, 'spectacular' indicates a very serious attack against a very serious target near-term," said former FBI counterterrorism analyst Matthew Levitt. CIA Director George Tenet warned in October that "you must make the assumption that al-Qaeda is in an execution phase and intends to strike us [again]." Tenet and other senior U.S. national-security officials have stated publicly that al-Qaeda is likely to launch another spectacular attack against the United States.

Senior U.S. military and intelligence sources began telling Insight more than a month ago that they had "warnings and indications" of a major new attack, possibly involving a nuclear weapon. Intelligence sources tell Insight that the details were of sufficient concern to activate a special antiterrorist unit -- the Nuclear Emergency Search Team (NEST), a 30-year-old federal organization whose mission it is to find and disarm nuclear weapons [see "Your Life May Depend on the Woman From NEST," Oct. 23, 1995]. NEST was activated shortly after 9/11 in response to a similar state of high alert that also was based on intelligence indicating al-Qaeda had plans to detonate a nuclear device in Washington or New York City.

The earlier "plot" is believed to have been thwarted by the massive roundup of suspected terrorists in the weeks after 9/11, according to top-secret briefings given to senior members of Congress late this summer, Insight is told by Capitol Hill staffers and intelligence officials familiar with the briefings.

That a nuclear-bomb plot may have been thwarted was made disturbingly clear, the sources say, by the disclosure that physical evidence indicated some detained al-Qaeda members actually had handled radioactive materials, including at least two who exhibited symptoms of radiation sickness. One of the sources said this "only intensified our concerns about al-Qaeda networks we continue to monitor. ... They exhibited symptoms of exposure to various radioactive substances" consistent with building a dirty bomb.

One intelligence source involved in tracking al-Qaeda in the United States told Insight in late September following the secret congressional briefings that, as a result of the post-9/11 roundups of al-Qaeda operatives, "there [was a fear that there] may actually [have been] one or more of these [dirty] bombs or the components to build them laying around in some public storage facility or some other place that these cells we busted up were using, and that's really scary." Today, these sources say intelligence indicates the materials may be in the hands of newly formed al-Qaeda

cells under the direct control of bin Laden, a possibility that in part led to the FBI's particularly gloomy Nov. 14 alert.

The sources said fresh intelligence collected on al-Qaeda's nuclear ambitions strongly indicates that a new scheme to attack the United States with some sort of nuclear device has been resurrected with the re-emergence of bin Laden and the reconstitution of unidentified al-Qaeda cells in the United States. These sources are gravely concerned.

The seriousness of the continuing al-Qaeda threat in the United States was reinforced vividly in September when authorities broke up what intelligence officials say was an important al-Qaeda terrorist cell in Buffalo, N.Y., that had been under federal surveillance since before the 9/11 attacks. Members of the alleged Buffalo cell are charged with aiding and abetting terrorists by having attended al-Qaeda's Al-Farooq terrorist training camp near Kandahar, Afghanistan -- a location not only where information was found detailing the construction of nuclear weaponry, but also enough low-grade uranium-238 to make a dirty bomb.

As the alleged Buffalo cell was being dismantled, U.S. counterterrorist intelligence operations were uncovering evidence of still other "sleeper" terrorist cells across the country -- cells Bush administration officials acknowledge they have yet to identify. In addition, and perhaps more alarmingly, senior intelligence officials now say a long-standing terrorist cell in addition to the one assigned to carry out the 9/11 attacks is known to have been operational and that many of its members have not been identified. In recent weeks, according to CIA sources, a handful of foreign students attending universities across the country have been linked definitively to al-Qaeda's hierarchy and are believed to be involved in plans for future attacks. The sources said secret detentions of the students are expected as soon as surveillance operations of the young men are deemed to have exhausted all useful intelligence.

"All I can say is that these and other al-Qaeda operatives we're monitoring may be part of the sorts of spectacular attacks" mentioned in the FBI's Nov. 14 alert, one of the CIA sources tells Insight. Those under scrutiny include a former Soviet KGB officer working at the United Nations who is believed to have worked on brokering deals for nuclear-weapons materials overseas.

It's no secret that for many years bin Laden has sought nuclear weapons to use against the United States and its allies. Western intelligence agencies secretly have tracked efforts by his far-flung terrorist network to acquire both the materials to build an A-bomb as well as fully constructed nuclear warheads. As this report was being completed, the son of a Pakistani nuclear scientist told authorities that bin Laden approached his father months before the Sept. 11 attacks about making nuclear bombs. The scientist's son reportedly said his father met bin Laden several times in Afghanistan. Months earlier, a number of Pakistani nuclear scientists were identified as having had discussions with bin Laden and his top bomb-making scientists about how to make nuclear weapons.

A former high-ranking Taliban official recently said uranium was smuggled from the Ukraine into Afghanistan where it was bought by the Taliban and given to bin Laden. Both Iraq and bin Laden are known to have tried to obtain nuclear-weapons technologies from the Ukraine, a country riddled with corruption and lax security over its nuclear stockpile. In September, Pyotr Simonenko, the leader of the Ukrainian Communist Party, released information showing that 200 of the 2,400 nuclear warheads in the Ukraine at the time of the Soviet Union's dissolution are unaccounted for. Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma is under investigation for military deals with Iraq in violation of U.N. sanctions [see "U.S. Wary of Kuchmagate," Nov. 26-Dec. 9].

A cache of weapons-grade uranium -- enough for a handful of small nuclear bombs -- remains stored at the Kharkiv Institute of Physics and Technology, an obscure Soviet-era defense lab where security has been of great concern to the United States. Iraqi officials openly have pursued trade deals with local companies and have visited Kharkiv's old Soviet weapons factories and research centers, including the Kharkiv Institute. Iraq maintains an "honorary consul" in Kharkiv who is a Ukrainian exporter with an office not far from the institute.

Connections between Iraq, bin Laden and al-Qaeda have provoked intense worry on the part of U.S. officials, who already strongly suspect Saddam Hussein assisted bin Laden's quest for nuclear weapons. Classified intelligence behind the FBI's alert indicates nuclear devices or materials have been obtained from Iraq that intelligence has linked to high-level al-Qaeda leadership. Much of this intelligence derives from a special Pentagon task force created by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld following the 9/11 attacks. Rumsfeld ordered a team of defense officials outside regular intelligence channels to focus on unearthing details about Iraq's ties to al-Qaeda and other terrorist networks by meticulously analyzing existing and real-time intelligence on terrorists and Iraq.

The product of this extraordinary undertaking is said to have disclosed heretofore unknown ties between bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization and Iraq. Pentagon officials recently confirmed that a number of senior al-Qaeda leaders have taken refuge in Iraq, a fact the officials do not find surprising. Classified intelligence from as far back as 1988 which was made available to Insight shows that Iraq has harbored notorious terrorists, such as Abu Nidal, and provided them with cash, protection and training facilities.

The issue of Iraqi ties to al-Qaeda was the subject of briefings given to select lawmakers in September that focused almost exclusively on Saddam's nuclear-weapons capabilities and his suspected transference of these capabilities to

al-Qaeda. Sources say intelligence indicates that al-Qaeda terrorists who lived and worked in the United States, including at least one of the 9/11 hijackers, were linked to bin Laden's nuclear-weapons-acquisition efforts. Congressional sources familiar with the briefings described this intelligence as "terribly disturbing." Their comments were echoed by senior intelligence officials, several of whom have worked to track suspected al-Qaeda operatives. That al-Qaeda cells have been linked to 9/11 hijackers suspected of being involved with efforts by the group to develop nuclear weapons is "unnerving," one of the sources emphasized.

This summer, Vice President Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld and Tenet outlined to senior congressmen the scope of NSA-collected "signals intelligence" (SIGINT) from satellites of contacts between Baghdad and al-Qaeda before and after the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Intelligence sources say the SIGINT "definitely" involved discussions of nuclear weapons of interest to al-Qaeda.

Intelligence agencies since openly have confirmed contacts between Iraq and al-Qaeda's leaders. Rumsfeld said intelligence on "these contacts has been increasing since 1998" and has expanded to include "credible evidence" that al-Qaeda leaders sought contacts in Iraq for assistance in acquiring WMDs.

Counterterrorist authorities say classified intelligence leaves "little doubt" Saddam has "a nuclear-weapons capability" that includes not only stockpiles of enriched uranium necessary for building a nuclear weapon and low-grade nuclear material for building crude dirty bombs, but also a strong likelihood that Iraq possesses an unknown number of Soviet-era "man-portable" nuclear bombs, some of which reportedly were offered to bin Laden. Iraq has denied it has or has sought WMDs and has claimed that it is in full compliance with various U.N. prohibitions on such matters.

Intelligence sources say the White House has evidence -- of which the United Nations long has been aware, according to former U.N. Iraqi nuclear-weapons inspector David Kay -- that Iraq successfully built and tested a variety of dirty bombs and that the technological know-how and materials to construct them may have been made available to al-Qaeda. U.S. intelligence long ago concluded that it was possible for Iraq to build a radiological dispersal device (RDD). Top-secret Iraqi nuclear-weapons documents later obtained by U.N. weapons inspectors prove Iraq successfully tested several types of the bombs using non-weapons-grade nuclear materials -- materials that would be significantly easier for al-Qaeda to obtain, transport and use than actual bomb-grade radioactive materials.

Additionally, although U.N. weapons inspectors destroyed much of Iraq's nuclear bomb-making infrastructure between 1991 and 1998, its bomb designs and nuclear-weapon components still are missing. "Iraq has never surrendered to inspectors its two completed designs for a nuclear bomb, nuclear-bomb components such as explosive lenses and neutron initiators that it is known to have possessed, or almost any documentation of its efforts to enrich uranium to bomb-grade using gas centrifuges, devices which are small and readily concealed from reconnaissance," says Steve Dolley of the Washington-based Nuclear Control Institute.

What's more frightening, top U.S. intelligence officials tell Insight, is Saddam's possible possession of portable tactical nuclear bombs. A former well-placed intelligence source privy to the details of Iraq's suspected acquisition of these bombs says, "In intelligence parlance, the likelihood that Iraq has these bombs [and that it may have provided some to al-Qaeda] is 'B-percent,'" -- a highly classified intelligence term that means the "highest degree of probability." The portable nukes that intelligence officials strongly suspect Saddam got his hands on were built by the former Soviet KGB and are believed to be in the one-kiloton range, which is enough destructive power to level a major inner-city area.

Laura Holgate, who was chief of a Pentagon program to secure Soviet nuclear stockpiles during the Clinton administration, recently said she believes a stolen tactical nuke is as great a risk as a dirty bomb.

Intelligence sources tell Insight that at least several dozen of the weapons were never recovered following the U.S.S.R.'s collapse. "That's a fact," a former high-ranking intelligence official with one of the United States' pre-eminent spy agencies says emphatically. The source says that in the early 1990s Iraq was provided with two of these portable nuclear bombs from ex-KGB officials and that these were detonated covertly to test their effectiveness as part of a deal under which Saddam was considering the purchase of an unknown number of the bombs.

Counterterrorist sources familiar with the matter exclusively tell Insight the evidence is in the form of both electronic-communications intercepts and spy-satellite imagery collected at the time of the tests, which CIA counterterrorists confirm.

The intelligence parallels information provided to this reporter in 1993 by a top Russian official and U.S. intelligence official during a background conversation with the two in Washington. The Russian official said at the time that both his government and the United States were gravely concerned about two portable tactical nuclear bombs in the KGB's possession that could not be accounted for and which were believed to have been diverted to a rogue Arab state or terrorist organization. The U.S. intelligence official, who now directs an important department of

the U.S. intelligence community, concurred with the Russian official, saying the intelligence agency he headed at the time was "fully aware" of the two missing nukes. Whether the missing nukes first were diverted to Iraq and then made their way into the hands of terrorists is unclear. What is clear is that U.S. officials increasingly are concerned that al-Qaeda has made significant inroads into acquiring nuclear weapons, perhaps with help from Iraq.

Anthony L. Kimery, an intelligence specialist, is a free-lance writer for Insight.

<http://www.insightmag.com/news/342909.html>

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Tuesday, 7 January, 2003, 23:01 GMT

Terror police find deadly poison

Doctors have been warned to look out for signs of exposure to the potentially lethal poison ricin, after it was found by anti-terrorist police at an address in north London.

Six Algerian men are being questioned in connection with the discovery, made following an intelligence tip-off.

The men were arrested on Sunday morning and are in their late teens, 20s and 30s.

Tony Blair said the arrests showed the continued threat of international terrorism was "present and real and with us now and its potential is huge".

The intelligence services are said to be "shocked and worried" by the discovery and are looking at possible links with suspected Islamic extremists.

Forensic analysis

The arrests involved officers from the Anti-Terrorist Branch, Special Branch and the Security Service.

Castor oil beans - from which ricin is made - and equipment and containers for crushing the beans were found at a flat in Wood Green, north London, where one of the men was arrested.

Police said forensic analysis of the address - where a small quantity of material tested positive as ricin - was continuing, although they do believe the poison was made there.

It was identified by scientists at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratories at Porton Down in Wiltshire.

Police have not ruled out the possibility that some ricin may already have been distributed, although they believe it is highly unlikely.

They will also be looking at whether the group were part of a wider operation, possibly involving the manufacture of other chemicals.

'Real evidence'

BBC home affairs correspondent Margaret Gilmore said: "For six months now MI5 and the anti-terrorist branch have been getting intelligence reports indicating that extreme groups want to launch a chemical, biological or radiological attack.

"Now we're being told this is probably the first real evidence they were trying to do this here in the UK."

It is thought that whoever made the poison did not have the capability to make a bomb, but they could have aimed to create panic by trying to kill small numbers of people.

Defence minister Geoff Hoon described the discovery of ricin as a "disturbing development".

Ricin is considered a potential biowarfare or bioterrorist agent and is on the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention's "B" list of agents - considered a moderate threat.

It is relatively easy to manufacture in small amounts but would be considered an unusual agent to use for a mass attack as it must be ingested or injected to take effect.

Large quantities were reportedly found in caves in Afghanistan.

It was also the toxin thought to have been used to murder dissident Bulgarian Georgi Markov, who was stabbed on Waterloo Bridge in London with a poisoned umbrella in 1978.

Mr Blair's official spokesman stressed there had been no specific intelligence about how the ricin was to have been used.

Deputy Chief Medical Officer Dr Pat Troop said: "While our message is still 'alert not alarm', we would re-iterate our earlier appeals for the public to remain vigilant and aware and report anything suspicious to police."

A Department of Health spokeswoman said all GPs and doctors had been told to look out for possible cases of ricin exposure.

Sir Timothy Garden, former assistant chief of defence staff, told BBC News 24: "If it's a significant quantity then it's a worry because this is a poisonous agent which would require a lot of work to produce in a major quantity for use by terrorists."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2636099.stm

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TERROR LAB RAIDED - BUT POISON IS MISSING

By Jeff Edwards, Chief Crime Correspondent

POLICE who raided an al-Qaeda poison factory in London fear most of the deadly ricin is missing and in the hands of terrorists.

Britain was on alert last night for an attack, possibly by aerosol spray or by smearing the substance on door handles at busy public buildings or shopping centres.

Confined spaces such as a com-muter train carriage, a Tube station or a lunchtime restaurant were thought to be possible targets of the original plot.

Six men and one woman were arrested on Sunday in swoops on the ricin "plant" - a flat in Wood Green, North London - and other addresses in the north and east of the capital.

The males - in their late teens, 20s and 30s - are all said to be Algerians linked to Osama bin Laden's network. The woman has been freed.

Up to 20 more confederates are feared to be operating in Britain, most of them living in London.

Armed Special Branch officers in white chemical warfare suits smashed their way into the rented Wood Green property in the early hours.

A small quantity of ricin - used in the 1978 umbrella murder in London of Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov - was found amid a kitchen laboratory for making more of it.

There were test tubes, flasks, crucibles and various chemical agents.

Last night senior sources within the Home Office warned: "This is a very sinister affair.

"What we have uncovered is a sophisticated laboratory set up to manufacture poison under the cover of an ordinary suburban home on the outskirts of London

"We have recovered a small amount of ricin but we fear a much larger amount may already have been made up and is in the hands of terrorists not so far identified.

"We do not want to spread alarm, but everyone must be vigilant."

Ricin, which is distilled from castor oil beans, kills by entering the bloodstream and attacking organs such as the lungs, liver and kidneys. It can be swallowed or inhaled and there is no antidote.

An anti-terrorist source said: "We were expecting to find a lot more material and manufactured poison than there was.

"There is a serious concern it may have been moved somewhere that we don't know about by other people who are at large and determined to carry out an attack."

All Britain's hospitals, health centres and GPs were put on high alert to watch for people with possible ricin poisoning, which starts with a fever and skin irritation.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said last night that the discovery highlighted the perils of weapons of mass destruction. He added:

"This is a real and active threat to our security and I warn people: It is only a matter of time before terrorists get hold of it.

"The arrests which were made show this danger is present and real and with us now. Its potential is huge."

Details of the police operation had been given by Met Assistant Commissioner David Veness after the Government's Porton Down research HQ in Wiltshire had confirmed the substance was ricin.

Three months ago, the Government warned of a possible al-Qaeda atrocity, with suspects trailed as they carried out reconnaissance of the London Underground. A poison gas attack was feared.

A number of the new suspects were monitored entering the country via the Eurostar from Paris or through Channel ports. All were believed travelling on false identities with forged papers.

Police - unaware of their exact intentions - decided to keep them under surveillance.

Security chiefs now fear the net may have been tightened too late to prevent ricin being left in the possession of terrorists. The poison can be used in four ways - sprayed into the atmosphere via a pressurised aerosol container, by injection, by swallowing, and by smearing on items such as steering wheels or door handles.

Although it would be hard to use ricin to massacre hundreds or thousands, it could be released as a cloud on the Underground.

Scientists rule out an attack on water supplies because the poison would be so diluted as to be ineffective.

Dr Pat Troop, the Government's deputy chief medical officer said: "We have alerted hospitals, health services and GPs about our concerns."

Ricin can be produced as a liquid or powder. The amount needed to kill the average adult is one microgram to every kilogram of body weight.

A Government health source said: "It is a relatively simple poison to manufacture.

"If you had a chemistry A level, the know-how and the right equipment, it would not be difficult to produce a usable amount."

Detectives last Sunday were briefed to expect deadly substances.

Inside the flat at Wood Green they discovered several dozen pieces of laboratory glassware.

There were chemicals used in the manufacture of ricin and a small number of castor oil beans.

People living or working nearby told of the raid by up to 15 officers.

Cafe worker Ali Goran, 20, said: "Some were wearing white suits, dressed like they were going into space or something.

"I never saw the people who were in the flat but the tenants keep changing."

Ismat Sirtmac, owner of the Liquor Bins off-licence below the sealed-off property, said he believed the men had lived there for about two or three months.

Some would go into his shop but they would not buy alcohol.

Assistant Commissioner Veness said yesterday that the police operation followed "receipt of intelligence".

He said the message was "alert not alarm", but the public must remain vigilant.

The six men were being questioned last night at the high-security unit of Paddington Green police station. ([Return to Contents](#))

Washington Post

January 9, 2003

Pg. 1

U.S. Is Sharing Iraq Data With Blix

Powell Says Some Intelligence Withheld

By Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writers

After weeks of delay, the United States within the past several days has begun providing United Nations inspectors with "significant" intelligence on Iraqi weapons programs that has enabled inspectors to become "more aggressive and to be more comprehensive in the work they're doing," Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said yesterday.

But Powell said in an interview that the Bush administration was still holding back some of its most sensitive information, waiting to see if inspectors "are able to handle it and exploit it. . . . It is not a matter of opening up every door that we have."

The increased U.S. assistance to the inspectors comes less than three weeks before Hans Blix, head of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohamed ElBaradei are scheduled to provide the U.N. Security Council with their first formal assessment of Iraqi compliance with U.N. disarmament demands. That assessment, to be delivered Jan. 27, is viewed by some Bush administration officials as a decision point on whether Iraq's cooperation with inspections has been sufficient to head off military action.

U.S. military preparations for such an assault have escalated in the past week, with increased troop and materiel deployments to the region. In the interview, Powell repeated the administration mantra that President Bush has made no decision about whether to go to war with Iraq. Asked to gauge the current probability of armed conflict, Powell said, "I think war is too serious to make those sorts of predictions." Bush, he added, "prefers a peaceful solution. . . . I choose not to put numbers on it."

Powell, who played a major role in persuading Bush last summer to take the problem of Iraq to the United Nations, has advocated letting the inspection process run a course that inspectors have indicated could take many more months before any conclusions are reached.

"The deadline we have before us right now is on the 27th of January, [when] we will all receive a report from Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei . . . and we will see what the inspectors have found or not found and what Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei think with respect to the presence or absence, or 'we don't know yet,' of weapons of mass destruction," Powell said. "At that point, we will have to make some judgments as to what to do next. What's the next step. But it is not necessarily a D-day for decision-making."

Powell, a retired four-star general and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the military buildup was being handled in a "measured way, so that it can be calibrated, and the rates can be increased, modified, held at a certain level." Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and military chiefs, Powell said, "are very familiar with the sustainability of forces in the field far away from their homes and bases, as am I."

Today, Blix and ElBaradei are scheduled to give the Security Council their complete analysis of Iraq's Dec. 7 declaration of its weapons programs. The declaration was mandated in the November U.N. resolution ordering the resumption of inspections. The two inspectors are expected to repeat an interim evaluation delivered last month that the document is incomplete.

Powell said at the time that the weapons declaration "totally fails" to meet Iraq's obligation for "full, final and complete" disclosure of its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs and constituted a "further material breach" of Baghdad's international obligations. But Powell added that Iraq still had time to comply.

Despite stepped-up inspections in recent weeks, few Security Council members expect the Jan. 27 assessment to provide a definitive conclusion on Iraqi cooperation. More likely, said a diplomat from one of the five nations that have permanent Security Council seats, it will be a "gray zone, uncomfortable to everybody." In the search for more clarity, members have advocated presenting the Iraqi government with a list of specific questions designed to close some of the many gaps in the Iraqi declaration and test Baghdad's intentions.

Another council diplomat suggested that those governments that have already declared Baghdad uncooperative -- including the United States and Britain -- view the questioning as a means to prove Iraqi violations while others, such as France and Russia, believe it could prove the opposite.

Powell described the questioning, including demands for specific information on generalities the Iraqis have provided concerning the destruction of previously disclosed weapons stocks, as "the right course of action."

In another key area regarding Iraq, Powell said that the administration has provided UNMOVIC and the IAEA with an outline of how to carry out sensitive interviews with Iraqi weapons scientists and technicians outside of the country. "I don't know that it's all glued together yet, but I know that [the inspectors] know there are ways to do that," he said.

"There is reluctance on their [the Iraqis'] part," Powell acknowledged. "There is concern about where [the scientists] go, where they get resettled to, what papers can they get, what documents, what status are they in when they leave their country, who should come with them."

U.S. officials have met repeatedly with Blix on the interviews, including a session Tuesday evening in New York. UNMOVIC last week received a list of 500 scientists from Iraq, but is still in the relatively early stages of determining whom to talk to and where. "We are determining if an engineer who worked on missiles is now making bicycles," said one U.N. inspection official. "We will begin interviews, but they have not happened yet."

The IAEA has attempted to conduct two interviews in private inside Iraq, but both scientists insisted that Iraqi government officials be present.

UNMOVIC and the IAEA have complained of U.S. failure to provide intelligence information backing its insistence that Iraq maintains programs to develop weapons of mass destruction.

In recent days, U.N. sources said, Blix has been receiving new information, although it "is a little opaque," one source said. ElBaradei said Tuesday that his inspectors in Iraq still need "more specific information to act on" from Washington. "We are in contact with the administration," he said in an interview with ABC News, "and I hope in the next few weeks we'll be getting much more information for us to be able to zero in on any suspicious activities."

Powell declined to provide specifics on what intelligence the U.S. government was turning over to the inspectors, but said "we want to flood this up" with information that would help inspectors do their job. He made it clear that the administration was waiting to see how initial "items" were handled. "The means by which we get this information is so sensitive, and if it is not handled properly or exploited in the right way, we will lose that channel," he said.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30349-2003Jan8.html>

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Security Assurances Weighed For N. Korea

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell held out the prospect yesterday of a settlement with North Korea over its nuclear weapons programs that would include formal assurances the United States has no plans to attack the communist state.

"We have made it clear we have no aggressive intent," Powell said, one day after the Bush administration said it is willing to have face-to-face talks with the government in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. "Apparently, they want something more than a passing statement."

U.S. allies in the region, especially South Korea, and Russia have pressed the administration to consider offering some form of security guarantee to North Korea to persuade it to reverse its decision to restart its nuclear weapons programs. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov said yesterday that instead of isolating North Korea, which he called "an erroneous approach," Washington should provide the security guarantee sought by Pyongyang.

Powell's remarks, in an interview at the State Department, suggested that the administration has begun to heed this concern, marking a further evolution in its strategy to persuade North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs.

Asked whether there is a formula that offers more than President Bush's repeated assurances that the administration has "no aggressive intent" against North Korea and North Korea's desire for a nonaggression pact with the United States, Powell replied: "You've just bounded a problem. That's what diplomacy is about."

As part of the administration's stepped-up diplomatic efforts, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice met yesterday for 40 minutes at the White House with her South Korean counterpart, Yim Sung Joon, in an effort to mend some of the strains between Washington and Seoul over how to respond to North Korea's actions. A senior South Korean diplomat indicated afterward that the administration's offer of direct talks, but no negotiations on weapons programs, was a troubling gamble. "We hope North Korea takes the message right," he said.

Powell emphasized that, at the talks, the administration would continue to insist that North Korea live up to prior agreements, which include ending its efforts to build nuclear weapons. "We're not going to pay for this football again" and enter into a new agreement with North Korea over its nuclear weapons programs, he said. But he pointed to statements, communiqués and a letter issued by President Bill Clinton during the 1994 negotiations "that gave the DPRK [North Korea] some assurances [on security] that they at least accepted at that time." Those "assurances" led to a freeze of North Korea's plutonium facility, which was recently reopened.

While many senior administration officials have been critical of Clinton's 1994 deal, saying it allowed an inevitable problem to fester, Powell lauded what is known as the Agreed Framework. "The previous administration I give great credit to for freezing that plutonium site," he said. "Lots of nuclear weapons were not made because of the Agreed Framework and the work of President Clinton and his team."

Although the administration subtly shifted its position on direct talks in an effort to dampen the atmosphere of crisis regarding North Korea as the U.S. government proceeds with plans for a possible war with Iraq, North Korea responded yesterday with more invective. "The 'nuclear issue' that renders the situation on the Korean Peninsula strained is a product of the U.S. strategy to dominate the world [and] bring a holocaust of a nuclear war to the Korean nation," the government's KCNA news agency said.

In the past month, the confrontation threatened to spiral out of control as Pyongyang took increasingly provocative steps in response to the U.S. decision to suspend fuel oil shipments -- after the administration discovered a clandestine nuclear project in North Korea -- and to briefly seize a ship carrying North Korean missiles bound for Yemen. North Korea evicted international weapons inspectors and restarted a plutonium reactor that had been shuttered as part of the 1994 accord, prompting the International Atomic Energy Agency on Monday to give Pyongyang "one last chance" before referring the matter to the United Nations Security Council.

U.S. officials dismissed yesterday's statement by North Korea, saying that it usually takes several days for the government there to respond to a new diplomatic tack. "The ball is in their court," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

Powell conceded that there are differences between the United States and other powers in the region -- Russia, China, South Korea and Japan -- over how to proceed with the next round of diplomacy. "There are different approaches about this: Should you talk? When should you talk? Would you negotiate? What do you put on the

table?" he said. "Those are all issues that are worth debating. But we have made it clear from the very beginning that we were keeping an open mind."

Powell stressed "we have a number of channels we're using" to communicate with the North Koreans and "they hear what we're saying." An administration official described these indirect talks as including quasi-official trips to North Korea by former government officials and meetings between low-level officials in unofficial venues, such as Hong Kong.

North Korea has indicated through these indirect talks that it wants the United States to send a relatively senior official, higher than an assistant secretary of state, to begin formal discussions, the official added.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30476-2003Jan8.html>

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Time.com

January 8, 2003

UN Moves To Take Iraqi Scientists Abroad

TIME Exclusive: UNMOVIC has completed arrangements to interview Iraqi officials in a location beyond Saddam's reach. But will Baghdad comply? And will the scientists themselves agree?

By Marguerite Michaels, New York

Even as UN weapons inspectors scour Iraqi installations for signs of prohibited weapons programs, Bush administration officials have insisted that their work would not be complete without interviewing Iraqi scientists outside the country. Now, TIME has learned, the UNMOVIC inspection team plans to begin that process within days, when they will begin inviting an undisclosed number of Iraqi scientists to leave Iraq and be interviewed in Cyprus. UN Security Council Resolution 1441 allows for the inspectors to interview scientists outside of Iraq, taking them and their families to locations where they will be free from intimidation by Saddam Hussein's regime. But the resolution provided no guidelines on the mechanics of such a process — where such interviews might take place, how the scientists and their families might be shepherded out of Iraq, how any request for political asylum would be handled, and so on. Although Cyprus has agreed to host the interviews, it has refused to grant asylum to Iraqi scientists and their families — although Britain and the U.S. have previously offered to take them.

But creating a safe haven where scientists can be interviewed abroad and their families can be put beyond Saddam's reach doesn't necessarily mean those scientists will agree to leave the country. UNMOVIC has made clear that it is unable to take Iraqi scientists abroad if they decline the invitation to travel. "We are not going to abduct anybody," said chief inspector Dr. Hans Blix last month. "And we're not serving as a defection agency." A hint of the problems that may arise emerged recently when UNMOVIC sought a private interview with an Iraqi academic, and the scientist himself insisted on an Iraqi government official being present. Not surprisingly, UNMOVIC is being tight-lipped over just who it plans to ask, and how the process of taking them out of Iraq may proceed.

Still, Baghdad will be far from comfortable at the prospect of individuals who may have damning evidence against the regime being allowed to spill the beans free from the threat of reprisals against themselves or their loved ones, and then defect to the West. But UNMOVIC is determined to conduct such interviews before its January 27 deadline for reporting back to the Security Council, and Iraq has been put on notice that any interference in the process will be viewed by the Council as the sort of demonstrable non-cooperation that would be taken as "material breach" that could trigger military action. Until now, Iraq has placed no obstacles in the path of the inspectors. Its response to UNMOVIC's efforts to interview scientists abroad, however, will be the toughest test yet of Baghdad's compliance.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,406336,00.html>

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New York Times

January 9, 2003

Military Says It Can't Make Enough Vaccines For Troops

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, Jan. 8 — One of the Army's top biodefense officers said today that the Pentagon does not have vaccines to protect troops from some virulent biological agents because it has not been able to offer enough money to commercial pharmaceutical companies to produce them.

The officer, Col. Erik A. Henchal, said the Army laboratory that he commands at Fort Detrick, Md., has developed 20 vaccines for various deadly agents. But most are sitting on the shelf, he said, because the Pentagon has not been able to attract interest from pharmaceutical companies, which see little commercial value in them.

Under normal circumstances, Pentagon researchers develop a drug or vaccine to a certain point, then license it to a commercial company for production. In the case of some biological agents, the demand for vaccines has not been sufficient to prod commercial drug companies to produce them on a large scale for civilian use.

In a wide-ranging interview, Colonel Henchal, who took command of the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases last June, also said that ports, airports and other logistical hubs could be prime terrorist targets for sowing panic among civilians, unleashing an international epidemic or disrupting military preparations in the Persian Gulf.

Until recently, Colonel Henchal said, the relatively small number of vaccine dosages the Pentagon would require for service members has discouraged commercial interest in developing such products for the military. He said new financing methods or perhaps a production facility dedicated to military use might be needed.

Moreover, delays of two to five years to obtain approval from the Food and Drug Administration only compounded the problem. "It's been difficult to get vaccines into production," the colonel said.

Even as the administration has prepared a plan to protect the nation against smallpox, Colonel Henchal said, the country and its armed forces remain vulnerable. "There are holes in a list of agents we think of as classical biological threats," he told reporters at a breakfast meeting. "We've been trying to fill those holes."

In some cases where vaccines are lacking, the colonel said, antibiotics can treat an infection if administered soon after exposure. But not all agents can be treated with antibiotics, he added.

Colonel Henchal spoke candidly for an hour about bioterror threats and vulnerabilities that many civilian policymakers have discussed in more muted terms, presumably to avoid raising public alarm.

For example, he said, releasing smallpox in the Frankfurt International Airport in Germany, with hundreds of thousands of travelers, "could create a worldwide epidemic of smallpox pretty quickly."

He also said terrorists would most likely use airplanes, boats or even cars equipped with foggers or sprayers, like those on crop dusters, to disperse biological agents.

The colonel's command is responsible for researching vaccines, therapeutic drugs and information about biological agents. It does not have primary responsibility for developing protective gear worn by troops or sensors designed to detect agents.

The military, he said, is still going through growing pains in consolidating and coordinating all the disparate units that have responsibility for dealing with terrorist attacks.

Last year, the Pentagon established a new Northern Command in Colorado to oversee the military's response to homeland security matters. Colonel Henchal said "connections were still being made" between the Army lab and the new military headquarters, which he said was in many ways still a "virtual command."

Asked to rank the most serious biological threats to American troops, Colonel Henchal said anthrax and smallpox were at the top. But because the United States is taking steps to inoculate its troops and civilian populations or has effective antibiotics against some germs, he said, terrorists may pursue other agents.

The British authorities found a small quantity of the deadly toxin ricin during an antiterrorist sweep in London over the weekend. Colonel Henchal said ricin is an effective agent against individual targets but would be less effective in a major attack because large quantities of the agent would be required.

Botulinum, a toxin that leads to paralysis and respiratory failure, is a serious threat because it is fast-acting and difficult to detect in the body, he said, noting that Iraq had the ability to produce the agent. When asked how large a hole there is in America's defenses against botulinum, he said, "I think it's pretty serious."

The Army lab has developed seven vaccines for various strains of botulinum, but the high cost of producing them has stalled their production, Colonel Henchal said. "They don't fit people's business models," he said.

Citing pharmaceutical industry figures, he said it costs \$600 million to bring a new vaccine to market. By comparison, the Army lab's annual budget is about \$50 million, he said.

Colonel Henchal said the military had improved its ability to analyze suspected agents. Portable field sensors can screen air samplings and give an initial analysis within 15 minutes, he said. A larger Army mobile laboratory can give a more detailed analysis within about 40 minutes. Specialists from the mobile lab recently were sent to the Persian Gulf, he said.

The Army lab, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, can provide a final and definitive analysis. But Colonel Henchal said that could take anywhere from 24 hours to 30 days, depending on the agent.

On the battlefield, Colonel Henchal said, commanders would not have detection equipment as a part of their force. If their units came under attack from suspected chemical or biological weapons, he said the commander's main recourse would be to order troops to don protective equipment.

American troops are trained to operate in the hot, cumbersome protective suits, but Colonel Henchal said the gear reduces combat effectiveness by about 30 percent. "It's just a reality," he said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/09/international/09MILI.html>

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USA Today
January 9, 2003
Pg. 6

Toxins Pose Grave Threat In Battle

No 'effective defenses' against botulinum, Army scientist warns

By Dave Moniz, USA Today

WASHINGTON — In the most detailed look yet at the deadly biological weapons Iraq could unleash against an invasion by U.S. troops, a top Army scientist warned Wednesday that U.S. forces have little or no defense against some of Iraq's most lethal toxins.

Col. Erik Henchal, chief of diagnostic systems at the Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md., said the most serious threat to American forces would be an attack with botulinum toxin. The toxin, which Iraq experimented with after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, is the most deadly substance on Earth, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It kills by paralyzing its victims and rendering them unable to breathe.

Henchal said U.S. forces have no vaccine to counter the toxin, which can be delivered by aircraft, boats or ground vehicles equipped with foggers and spray nozzles. There is an antitoxin for people who have been exposed to botulinum toxin, but supplies are scant, and even then, victims may have to use ventilators to breathe for weeks or months afterward.

"We don't have effective defenses," Henchal said. "It's a pretty serious threat."

Iraq claims to have destroyed 2,100 gallons of botulinum toxin since 1991, but U.S. strategists worry that it could have kept a supply.

Henchal discussed several "holes" in U.S. chemical and biological defenses, including the lack of a vaccine to counter plague.

The Army's Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases is one of the world's top authorities on lethal agents that include botulinum toxin, anthrax and Ebola virus.

Henchal spoke about threats to U.S. forces during a breakfast with Pentagon reporters. He said he was confident that the U.S. military could detect most chemical and biological weapons on the battlefield, but he highlighted a number of potential problems:

*A chemical or biological attack against ports or airfields in the Persian Gulf could have a paralyzing effect on military operations. Iraq has missiles and artillery shells that could reach troops in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia.

*Given potential threats from anthrax, botulinum toxin and smallpox, it's likely that large numbers of U.S. troops would have to fight in cumbersome protective suits designed to seal out biological and chemical agents. That could slow soldiers' movements by as much as a third.

*One doomsday scenario, Henchal said, would involve Saddam unleashing smallpox virus in a civilian airport in Europe or elsewhere, creating chaos and terror among U.S. allies.

Because of fears that Iraq has maintained supplies of chemical and biological weapons — including rare germ agents that resist antibiotics — the United States has taken unusual steps to safeguard the military. The Pentagon has been inoculating troops against anthrax since the mid-1990s. The Bush administration recently announced it would begin vaccinating health care providers and military personnel against smallpox.

A war with Iraq, one senior Pentagon official said recently, would put U.S. troops at the highest risk of chemical or biological weapons attacks since World War I, when troops routinely carried gas masks.

<http://www.usatoday.com/usatoday/20030109/4764720s.htm>

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New York Times
January 9, 2003

India-Pakistan Nuclear Competition

India and Pakistan asserted their nuclear credentials once again yesterday, with India announcing that it would test several missiles in the next few days and Pakistan's army taking delivery of domestically produced medium-range missiles able to carry nuclear warheads. India will test a shorter-range version — 370 to 500 miles — of its surface-to-surface Agni missile, which can carry nuclear weapons. It will also test a short-range supersonic cruise missile with a range of 175 miles, developed with Russia. In Pakistan, the army took delivery of Hatf V Ghauri missiles.

--Amy Waldman (NYT)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/09/international/asia/09BRIE2.html>

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Global Security Newswire (nti.org)
January 8, 2003

Pentagon Seeks Improved Sensors For Aerosol Attacks

By Bryan Bender, Global Security Newswire

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Defense Department last week launched a crash research program to develop new sensors to rapidly identify — in less than 60 seconds — biological agents dispersed in aerosol form, according to a Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency announcement.

The effort will focus on technologies that can detect optical characteristics, invisible to the naked eye, of biological agents released in vapor or spray form, according to a project description.

DARPA said it is seeking proposals to design and develop “high-risk, high-leverage technologies and prototypes that have the potential to greatly reduce the false alarm rate of trigger sensors for biological warfare agents.”

Supporting a Nationwide Biological Defense Network

The effort, which is seeking proposals from qualified corporations, research centers, and universities, would support a Pentagon-wide program to develop the first multilayered, nationwide biological detection system to defend highly populated areas from germ warfare (see GSN, Sept. 5, 2002).

A primary objective of the multibillion-dollar Biological Defense Homeland Security Support Program, which officially got underway in October at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, is to combine traditional detection techniques such as environmental sensors with medical data from hospitals and health care providers to create an overarching, computerized biological surveillance system. Officials hope to field a prototype as early as next year in Washington.

The newly announced Spectral Sensing of Bio-Aerosols Program is designed to assist that wider effort by providing more effective means to quickly identify biological pathogens released into the air by relying on a series of novel detection techniques.

“A critical component of an effective biological warfare defense is real-time, pre-exposure detection, discrimination, and identification of the full spectrum of threats: spore, bacteria, virus and toxin,” according to a Dec. 30 public notice. “The goal of the program is to develop point detection sensors with response times of less than one minute” and with fewer false alarms than current sensors, the notice said.

The program will establish a “government referee” to develop an aerosol test facility. Proposals will be tested against a “matrix of specific threat organisms, the maximum time allowed for detection, the threshold levels of threat quantity and the detector performance.”

DARPA will also evaluate sensors’ ability to detect biological agents from a distance.

Optical Signatures and Other Novel Technologies

The project places emphasis on new detection techniques capable of identifying the optical characteristics of a biological release. Little work has been done in this area and as a result the level of effectiveness remains unclear, according to DARPA.

“Investigators of biosensors have long held the belief that useful optical signatures can be exploited to detect bio-aerosols with improved selectivity and reduced false alarm rates,” according to a DARPA program document.

“DARPA will conduct a rigorous evaluation of the potential to exploit these signatures with the goal of developing systems that rapidly detect biological agents,” the document says.

Quick Timeline

Program officials have established a short timeline for the bio-aerosols research and development program. A bidders conference will be held March 5. “Source selection will be completed in April 2003, followed immediately by contracting,” DARPA said.

The urgency in developing enhanced biological detection systems comes amid new indications of the growing threat of biological terrorism. The program gets underway as British authorities this week arrested six men of North African descent found with ricin, the deadly agent extracted from castor beans (see related GSN story, today). Andy Oppenheimer, a chemical and biological weapons experts for Jane’s Information Group, told the Associated Press this week that terrorists could kill large numbers of people with ricin if it were successfully dispensed in aerosol form. “You only need milligrams to kill somebody,” he said.

http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/newswires/2003_1_8.html

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Inside The Pentagon

January 9, 2003

Pg. 1

DOD Transfers Funds To Homeland Security Dept. To Study Bioweapons

The Defense Department will transfer \$420 million this year from its chemical and biological defense program to the Department of Homeland Security so the new agency can spearhead its own projects to benefit civilians.

On Dec. 18, the Pentagon comptroller moved the fiscal year 2003 dollars from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, which oversees the military's chem-bio defense program, to DHS. A Pentagon spokesman said the new federal agency is expected to use the money to establish a “National Bio-Weapons Defense Analysis Center” and pursue efforts to detect biological agents in urban areas.

The transfer in funds does not, however, indicate a diminished role for the military in chem-bio defense. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld requested the amount on top of his \$1 billion FY-03 request for such programs, promising lawmakers the military would relinquish the \$420 million to the homeland security agency when needed. DHS could then create an analysis center to “coordinate countermeasures to potential attacks by terrorists using weapons of mass destruction,” Rumsfeld told a House panel last July. (According to the White House reorganization plan, DOD is expected to “transfer” the analysis center to DHS by March 1, although the virtual center is not yet operational.)

Congress approved the funds, and DTRA flagged the money as homeland security support and to create a new biological counterterrorism center.

A majority of the amount to be reallocated represents research and development dollars, according to “program budget decision No. 725.”

About \$385 million will be extracted from defense-wide research and development accounts managed by DTRA: \$25 million from basic research; \$137 million from applied research; \$162 million from advanced technology development; \$55 million for “advanced component development and prototypes”; and \$6 million for research, development, test and evaluation management support.

Only \$30 million will be taken from defense-wide procurement dollars, and \$5 million from military construction.

DHS is expected oversee the nation's civilian chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear countermeasures.

Meanwhile, DOD has established an Army-led joint program executive office for military chem-bio defense programs, as well as a Joint Staff requirements office focused on chem-bio, radiological and nuclear defense. The two federal agencies are planning to work together to boost the nation's defense against such terrorist attacks.

During a June 7 forum, Anna Johnson-Winegar, deputy assistant to the defense secretary for chemical and biological defense, said a new bio-weapons defense analysis center was needed to improve threat assessment research, now a major gap in U.S. capabilities. She was unsure at the time which DOD chem-bio efforts would transfer to the new agency (*Inside the Pentagon*, June 20, 2002, p2; June 13, 2002, p11).

The Pentagon spokesman said the \$420 million added to DTRA's chem-bio program so far represents the only expected transfer.

“We're in a mode of making a major shift . . . a move away from our traditional role [of addressing] only the warfighter's needs, and moving more to an area where homeland security, the civilian sector, has become a much higher priority for us [and] a much larger part of our budget,” Johnson-Winegar said at the forum. The recent budget document transferring the chem-bio funds also reallocates \$82 million in FY-03 from the Defense Information Systems Agency to DHS so it can assume purview of the National Communication System. NCS is an interagency program that grants certain government workers priority access to the nation's telecommunications networks during a crisis. NCS assets are also slated to move to the agency after March 1.

-- *Anne Plummer*

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New York Times
January 9, 2003

Seventh Suspect Arrested In London Raid That Found Toxin

By Sarah Lyall

LONDON, Jan. 8 — A seventh suspect has been detained as part of an antiterrorism sweep that also uncovered a small amount of ricin, a deadly toxin, in an apartment in Wood Green, in north London, the authorities said today. Six suspects were arrested in an antiterrorist sweep on Sunday, and the seventh suspect, a 33-year-old man, was arrested on Tuesday, the police said.

The suspects are being questioned but have not been charged. They are said to be mostly of North African origin and to have kept material for manufacturing ricin, considered a bioterrorism weapon, in the Wood Green apartment. Ricin can be fatal in small doses and can be administered by injection, ingestion, inhalation or contact with the skin. Bioterrorism experts say it is used more often for assassinations or as a way to spread panic, rather than as a weapon of mass destruction.

Detectives are searching for other suspects believed to be part of the group. There are fears that a large cache of ricin is unaccounted for.

Security has been stepped up in the London subway and in other public places, and the government is warning the public to be alert to the possibility of terrorist attacks.

Officials in Islington, the borough that includes Wood Green, said that two of the suspects, an Algerian and an Ethiopian, had said they were 17 and seeking asylum. They had been granted housing by the local council shortly after Sept. 11, 2001.

The suspects were said to be living in their latest house, a one-bedroom apartment above a pharmacy, for about a month. It was inside that apartment that the police found the ricin traces and the equipment used to make the poison, which is derived from the castor bean.

The two men "have been placed in this accommodation under our obligation to provide support to destitute asylum-seekers," a council official said. Because the two were considered unaccompanied minors, the council was obliged to care for them and they were not housed in a national asylum center, the official said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/09/international/europe/09LOND.html>

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