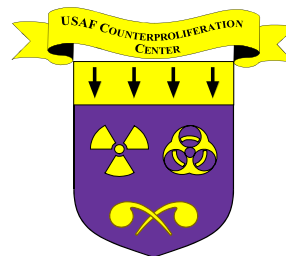


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Analysis

U.S. Officials Make It Clear: Exile Or War

By Dana Milbank, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration presented the world with a nonnegotiable demand yesterday regarding Iraqi President Saddam Hussein: It is time for him to go.

In the Azores and on Washington talk shows, President Bush, Vice President Cheney and Secretary of State Colin L. Powell made clear that it was too late for Iraq to disarm, too late for further weapons inspections and too late for more diplomacy to get the world to support the U.S. *casus belli*. Although they are giving the United Nations another day to agree with the American position, Bush and his lieutenants made clear that that was mere symbolism. The only means to avoid war, they said, was Hussein's exile.

"Saddam can leave the country, if he's interested in peace," the president said. "He got to decide whether he was going to disarm, and he didn't. He can decide whether he wants to leave the country."

The vice president, previewing Bush's hastily arranged appearance in the eastern Atlantic, also delivered Hussein the flight-or-fight choice. Cheney said Hussein's exile "would be the only acceptable outcome I can think of at this point." Affirming that an offer to disarm was no longer an option to avoid war, he said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that "I'm hard-put to specify what it is he could do with credibility at this stage that would alter the outcome."

In delivering Hussein an ultimatum -- essentially, leave now or face war within days -- the Bush administration has come full circle in stating its goal in Iraq. It began almost a year ago by talking of "the removal of Saddam" or the more polite "regime change." But administration officials realized that to win U.N. and international support, they would do better if they spoke of their goal as "disarmament." Dropping "regime change" for a while, they said that a disarmed Hussein could remain in power, because, in one artful phrase, it would mean "the regime will have effectively changed."

The administration's return to its original goal -- ousting Hussein -- is a reflection that it no longer has hope of winning international support for its effort by describing its principal goal as disarmament. The objective, Cheney said plainly yesterday, "clearly is to get rid of his government and to put a new one in its place. And that's what we think is required in order to achieve the objectives of eliminating his WMD," or weapons of mass destruction.

Although Bush offered to give U.N. diplomats another day to support the U.S. resolution blessing a confrontation with Hussein, he and his aides made clear that this was mostly for show and that they had no hope of victory today before the Security Council. Even Powell, the most dovish among the administration's major players, warned non-Iraqis in Baghdad to flee. "My personal advice is they ought to take a hard look at the situation they are in, and it would be probably better for them to start leaving or making plans to leave," he said on CNN's "Late Edition." Far from envisioning a peaceful solution, Cheney leveled a serious new allegation that implied Hussein already has nuclear weapons. "We know he's been absolutely devoted to trying to acquire nuclear weapons, and we believe he has, in fact, reconstituted nuclear weapons," Cheney said.

In the Azores, after a meeting of Britain, Spain, Portugal and the United States that lasted only an hour, the leaders did not present as anything more than pro forma their granting the United Nations an additional 24 hours to vote on a resolution. "Even if it's one in one million, it's always worthwhile fighting for a political solution," said Portuguese Prime Minister Jose Manuel Durao Barroso.

In formally abandoning inspections -- Bush did not even use the word yesterday -- and all but abandoning diplomacy, the president and his top lieutenants vented their anger at the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency, France and other powers for thwarting the United States.

The United Nations, Cheney said, "has proven incapable of dealing with the threat that Saddam Hussein represents, incapable of enforcing its own resolutions, incapable of meeting the challenge we face in the 21st century of rogue states armed with deadly weapons." Tracing French opposition to actions against Iraq since 1995, Cheney argued: "They have consistently opposed efforts to hold Saddam Hussein accountable for his actions."

Cheney dismissed IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei as "wrong" about Iraq's nuclear program. Of ElBaradei's agency, he said: "They have consistently underestimated or missed what it was Saddam Hussein was doing."

With most of the world opposed to the administration's plans to invade Iraq, Cheney said nations that had not experienced the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks had not "come to grips" with the threat. "They're still, I think, thinking very much in terms of the last century, if you will, in terms of policies and strategies and institutions," the vice president

said. He added that when it comes to "rogue states and terrorists equipped with deadly weapons in the future, the only nation that really has the capability to deal effectively with those threats is the United States." Bush, after his Azores meeting, was no more flattering of the French ("they said they were going to veto anything that held Saddam to account") and of the United Nations, which he offered a role in "post-Saddam" Iraq. "And that way, it can begin to get its legs of responsibility back," he said.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35410-2003Mar16.html>

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Time
March 24, 2003
Pg. 34

Enter The Cleanup Crew

The second wave of U.S. troops would search for Iraqi weapons and try to befriend the locals

By Terry McCarthy, Kuwait City

If Major Eric Murray of the 3rd Infantry Division crosses the border into Iraq, along with his M-16 rifle and 9-mm Beretta pistol he will be carrying another weapon of war: a briefcase full of cash. Just hours after the 3rd's M1A1 tanks blow through towns and villages on their way to Baghdad, Murray and his Civil Affairs Direct Support Teams will be looking to quickly spend tens of thousands of dollars to start rebuilding blown-up wells, bombed bridges and downed electricity grids. The idea, says Murray, is that instead of waiting for assistance from nongovernmental organizations, "we immediately contract the locals."

Should war with Iraq break out, it would begin with bombing, commando raids and armored columns pushing north from Kuwait. A second wave of soldiers, including Murray, would follow, fanning out across Iraq on a different mission. Their principal tasks: to win over the Iraqi people by handing out emergency humanitarian aid, and to unearth Saddam's presumed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons. These soldiers would be operating in a lawless, battle-scarred landscape in which civilians would be fearful and shell-shocked but might have information about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) concealed from U.N. inspectors. And they would be working against the clock. "Once the regime falls, the cities are imploding and the Baath Party is taking off running, there's going to be a vacuum," says Captain Vern Tubbs, 37, coordinator of the civil affairs mission for the 3rd Infantry. "We'll be trying to keep the country from collapsing."

The success of the second wave would be critical to the Bush Administration, helping justify a war that has been so angrily opposed around the world. It would also be crucial to persuading the international community to join in funding the reconstruction of Iraq. "I think the planners realize they will be judged more on this than on the fighting," says Major Chris Hughes, a U.S. military spokesman in Kuwait.

The most urgent job would be the search for hidden biological and chemical weapons. Special-forces teams from the Navy SEALs, the Air Force, the Marines and the Army's Delta Force would hunt down and secure such sites. Major General John Doesburg, who heads the Soldier Biological and Chemical Defense Command, which trains the forces that will decontaminate the sites, says his goal would be to secure all suspect weapons sites for inspections, rather than blow them up and risk spreading toxins in the air. "Our experience from the first Gulf War was that Saddam Hussein mixed things in his depots and weapons-storage sites. You don't want to say it's purely conventional munitions and miss the chemical munitions," says Doesburg.

If a suspect stockpile is located, Consequent Management Assessment Teams consisting of about two dozen soldiers each would be directed to it. Clad in hazmat gear, they would take samples, determine what they are and figure out the best way to handle them. The Army also recently sent to the Persian Gulf its 520th Theater Medical Laboratory, the most sophisticated portable toxin tester in the U.S. military and the only one of its kind. The search for contraband weapons would begin in the war's opening hours and continue until the U.S. is confident it has found all such stockpiles—something that could take months, U.S. officials say.

Second wavers would also expect to handle captured or surrendering Iraqi troops. Based on the first Gulf War experience, the U.S. is hoping for mass defections in the event of a new war. Interrogators would first sift detainees for high-ranking Baath Party officials or people with knowledge of WMD programs. "We will be putting everyone on a black, gray or white list," says the 3rd Infantry's Murray. "Our intelligence teams know who the key figures are they want to talk to." To help identify the bad guys, the Army has CDs with photographs of some 2,000 Iraqis suspected of war crimes. The process could take a while: there are no more than 100 Army interrogators who speak fluent Arabic. But the majority of the low-ranking POWs would probably land on the white list—that is, Iraqis who

pose no threat to allied forces. These soldiers may simply be set free or even converted into a post-Saddam peacekeeping force.

The trickiest battle for hearts and minds would be fought with humanitarian-assistance programs. These would be supervised by the military's civil affairs units, which consist of a large number of reservists with a wide range of nonmilitary skills, from communications and engineering experts to linguists, civil-aviation controllers and even veterinarians. They would conduct assessments of the need for food, water, medical care and shelter, and "get their reports back within hours," according to a U.S. military source.

Both the civil affairs units and U.S. soldiers have been instructed to arrive with open arms and full pockets. "I don't want them to see us and think we are another dictator taking over," says Lance Corporal Martin Holtzman, 20, a machine gunner with the 7th Marine Regiment. More than 60% of Iraqis rely on government rations for food, and the U.S. assumes that distribution systems will break down if war starts. Combat units would be carrying yellow-bagged rations that look like the military's own meals ready to eat (MRE) to hand out to civilians in immediate need. Civil affairs personnel would also hustle to restart bulk-food supplies. World Food Program stockpiles of wheat and rice would be shipped in to the southern Iraqi port of Umm Qasr and then trucked north.

The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in Washington has stockpiled enough blankets, plastic sheeting and medical kits in Kuwait and Dubai for 1 million people, and would channel those supplies into the country even as the fighting continued. "The Iraqi troops need to know we plan this enormous humanitarian effort—that is going to be the difference between them digging in and fighting and them giving up," says U.S. military spokesman Hughes. One variable is hard to estimate: the hearts and minds of American soldiers. The idea of getting warm and fuzzy with the enemy so quickly is a hard one for some soldiers to accept. "It is a very difficult transition," says 1st Lieut. Will Riley, 28, who is working with the 3rd Infantry. "We have a mission one minute to go out and kill it if it moves—and then suddenly we have to protect and police." But that's precisely the challenge, and that's exactly what a skeptical world will be waiting to see.

—*With reporting by Alex Perry and Simon Robinson/south of the Iraqi border and Mark Thompson/Washington*
<http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030324/nsecond.html>

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Washington Times
March 15, 2003

Chinese Sold Iraq 'Dual-Use' Chemical

Officials confirm France aided deal

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

Despite French denials, U.S. intelligence and defense officials have confirmed that Iraq purchased from China a chemical used in making fuel for long-range missiles, with help from brokers in France and Syria.

Bush administration officials said the sale took place in August and was described in classified intelligence reports as a "dual-use" chemical used in making missile fuel.

Officials discussed details of the chemical sale after it was first reported by columnist William Safire in Thursday's editions of the New York Times.

France's government, however, denied that the sale took place and disputed Mr. Safire's assertion that French intelligence agencies knew about it.

In Paris, Foreign Ministry spokesman Francois Rivasseau said reports of the sale are not true. "These accusations are devoid of all foundation," he said.

"They are a part of a polemic that we do not want to get involved in. In line with the rules currently in force, France has neither delivered, nor authorized the delivery of such materials, either directly or indirectly," the spokesman said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz met yesterday with France's ambassador to the United States for what were termed "candid" discussions on Iraq.

The meeting at the Pentagon with French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte came at a time of strained U.S.-French relations. Mr. Levitte sought to lobby Mr. Wolfowitz against U.S. military action in Iraq, and Mr. Wolfowitz told the ambassador that 12 years of waiting had been too costly in terms of the growing threat from Baghdad, according to a U.S. official present at the meeting. The issue of chemical and spare-parts sales to Iraq were not discussed.

The chemical transferred to Iraq was a transparent liquid rubber called hydroxy terminated polybutadiene, or HTPB, that is used in making solid fuel for long-range missiles, said U.S. officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The sale of the chemical was known since last summer, when it was traced from China's Qilu Chemicals company in Shandong province, the officials said.

"Qilu Chemicals is the largest manufacturer of HTPB in China," one official said.

Although used mainly for making solid fuel for missiles, HTPB also is used for commercial purposes, such as for space launches.

Disclosure of the Chinese chemical sale comes amid other recent intelligence reports revealing that an unidentified French company sold military-aircraft spare parts to Iraq in January.

The spare parts for Iraq's French-made Mirage jets and Gazelle helicopters were sold to a company in the United Arab Emirates and sent to Iraq over land from a third country, intelligence officials said.

The chemical sale to Iraq, according to the officials, involved a French company known as CIS Paris, that helped broker the chemical sale in August of 20 tons of HTPB, which was shipped from China to the Syrian port of Tartus. The chemicals were then sent by truck from Syria into Iraq to a missile-manufacturing plant.

A CIA spokesman declined to comment on the sale.

U.S. officials said the Chinese chemical shipment was purchased by the company in charge of making solid missile fuel for long-range missiles.

A CIA report to Congress made public in January stated that Iraq has constructed two new "mixing" buildings for solid-propellant fuels at a plant known as al-Mamoun. The facility was originally built to produce the Badr-2000 — also known as the Condor — solid-propellant missile.

The new buildings "appear especially suited to house large, U.N.-prohibited mixers of the type acquired for the Badr-2000 program," the CIA report stated.

"In fact, we can find no logical explanation for the size and configuration of these mixing buildings other than an Iraqi intention to develop longer-range, prohibited missiles (that is, to mix solid propellant exclusively geared for such missiles)," the report said.

A second plant at al-Mamoun has casting pits that "were specifically designed to produce now-proscribed missile motors," the report said.

Information about the chemical and parts transfers to Iraq, which are banned under U.N. sanctions, comes amid growing anti-French sentiment in the United States.

France's government has been actively opposing U.S. efforts to win U.N. Security Council support for taking military action to disarm Iraq.

Retired Air Force Lt. Gen. Thomas McInerney said France's actions in opposing its longtime ally should be punished.

"Those who do not take part in the liberation of Iraq should not be allowed to take part in the reconstruction of Iraq," he said.

China has been identified as a major supplier of chemical-, biological- and nuclear-weapons goods and missile systems to rogue states.

The chemical HTPB is listed as a controlled export on a list of missile-related goods made public by the Chinese government in August — about the same time that the HTPB transfer to Iraq was made.

A Chinese Embassy spokesman had no immediate comment on reports of the HTPB sale. But the spokesman, Xie Feng, said "irresponsible accusations" about China's exports have been made in the past.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030315-73400324.htm>

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New York Times

March 16, 2003

Iraq Links Germs For Weapons To U.S. And France

By Philip Shenon

WASHINGTON, March 15 — Iraq has identified a Virginia-based biological supply house and a French scientific institute as the sources of all the foreign germ samples that it used to create the biological weapons that are still believed to be in Iraq's arsenal, according to American officials and foreign diplomats who have reviewed Iraq's latest weapons declaration to the United Nations.

The American supply house, the American Type Culture Collection of Manassas, Va., had previously been identified as an important supplier of anthrax and other germ samples to Iraq.

But the full extent of the sales by the Virginia supply house and the Pasteur Institute in Paris has never been made public by the United Nations, which received the latest weapons declaration from Iraq in December.

Nor was there any public suggestion before now that Iraq had — apart from a small amount of home-grown germ samples — depended exclusively on supplies from the United States and France in the 1980's in developing the biological weapons that American officials say are now believed to threaten troops massing around Iraq. The shipments were approved by the United States government in the 1980's, when the transfer of such pathogens for research was legal and easily arranged.

A copy of the pages of the Iraqi declaration dealing with biological weapons was provided to The New York Times, and it reveals the full variety of germs that Iraq says it obtained from abroad for its biological weapons program. The document shows that the American and French supply houses shipped 17 types of biological agents to Iraq in the 1980's that were used in the weapons programs. Those included anthrax and the bacteria needed to make botulinum toxin, among the most deadly poisons known. It also discloses that Iraq had tried unsuccessfully to obtain biological agents in the late 1980's from other biological supply houses around the world.

The quantities of the agents were described in terms of ampuls, which are sealed glass or plastic containers about the size of test tubes.

Iraq has acknowledged that it used the American and French germ samples to produce tons of biological weapons in the 1980's. It has repeatedly insisted in recent years that the program was shut down, and all of the biological material destroyed, in the 1990's, an assertion that the United States and many other nations have said is demonstrably untrue.

The United States, France and other Western countries placed severe restrictions on the shipment of biological materials in the early 1990's, after the extent of Iraq's biological weapons program became clear in the aftermath of the 1991 Persian Gulf war.

Spokesmen for the American Type Culture Collection and the Pasteur Institute said that they were not surprised that Iraq had identified them as the exclusive foreign suppliers of germ samples to its weapons programs. They said that all of their shipments had been legal and that they were made with the understanding that the agents would be used for research and medical purposes.

"A.T.C.C. could never have shipped these samples to Iraq without the Department of Commerce's approval for all requests," said Nancy J. Wysocki, vice president for human resources and public relations at the American Type Culture Collection, a nonprofit organization that is one of the world's leading biological supply houses. "They were sent for legitimate research purposes."

Michele Mock, a microbiologist at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, said in a telephone interview: "In the 1980's, the rules were entirely different. If there was an official letter, there was no reason to avoid providing this material. One good thing now is that the rules have changed."

The Iraqi statement on its bioweapons was prepared by the Iraqis in 1997 and was incorporated in its entirety into the full weapons declaration provided to the United Nations last year, officials said.

The bioweapons declaration was obtained by Gary B. Pitts, a Houston lawyer who is representing ailing Gulf war veterans in a lawsuit claiming that their illnesses were explained by exposure to chemical or biological weapons that were known to be in Iraq's arsenal in the war. United Nations officials confirmed the authenticity of the document. Mr. Pitts said that American Type Culture Collection, which is a defendant in the lawsuit, and the Pasteur Institute should have known in the 1980's that "it was unreasonable to turn over something like this to Saddam, especially after he had used weapons of mass destruction in the past."

"It's ironic that we're now talking about going into Iraq to clean up these weapons," Mr. Pitts added.

He had previously made public a copy of Iraq's chemical weapons declaration. In it, the Baghdad government identified several major suppliers for its production of nerve gas and other chemical weapons. Apart from two small suppliers in the United States that are now defunct, most of the chemical suppliers identified in the report were European.

Jonathan Tucker, a former United Nations weapons inspector who is a visiting fellow at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington, said that the 1980's "were a more innocent time, and the default in those days was to supply these cultures to academic research labs without asking many questions."

"At the time, the U.S. government was tilting toward Iraq, was trying to improve relations with Iraq, and the tendency was not to scrutinize these requests," Mr. Tucker said.

But Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project, an arms control research group, said that the biological supply houses should have realized that Iraq might use the germ samples to make weapons, especially since it was known then that Iraq had used chemical weapons against Iranian troops in the Iran-Iraq war.

"If you know that the buying country is involved in a chemical weapons program, you have an obligation to ask some questions rather than just send it out," Mr. Milhollin said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/16/national/16BIO.html>

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Washington Post

March 16, 2003

Pg. 17

U.S. Lacks Specifics On Banned Arms

By Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writer

Despite the Bush administration's claims about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, U.S. intelligence agencies have been unable to give Congress or the Pentagon specific information about the amounts of banned weapons or where they are hidden, according to administration officials and members of Congress.

Senior intelligence analysts say they feel caught between the demands from White House, Pentagon and other government policymakers for intelligence that would make the administration's case "and what they say is a lack of hard facts," one official said.

"They have only circumstantial evidence . . . nothing that proves this amount or that," said an individual who has regularly been briefed by the CIA.

The assertions, coming on the eve of a possible decision by President Bush to go to war against Iraq, have raised concerns among some members of the intelligence community about whether administration officials have exaggerated intelligence in a desire to convince the American public and foreign governments that Iraq is violating United Nations prohibitions against chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons and long-range missile systems.

"They see a particular truck associated with chemical weapons activities keep reappearing, and they estimate chemical activities are there, but that and most intelligence would not pass the courtroom evidence test. For policymakers, who are out on a limb, that is not enough," one official said, adding that he questioned whether the administration is shaping intelligence for political purposes.

Said another senior intelligence analyst, "If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck and looks like a duck, we professionals say it's a duck. . . . They [policymakers] want a smoking duck."

Although senior intelligence officials said they are convinced Iraq is hiding weapons of mass destruction, they feel they will not be able to prove it until after an invasion, when U.S. military forces and weapons analysts would have unrestricted access. These officials said the administration is withholding some of the best intelligence on suspected Iraqi weapons -- uncertain as it is -- from U.N. weapons inspectors in anticipation of war.

"They are clearly hiding weapons, but it is a Catch-22 situation that we will only prove after an invasion," one senior intelligence official said.

U.S. intelligence on Iraqi weapons sites has raised a credibility problem involving the U.N. inspectors and, more recently, members of Congress.

Intelligence agencies in December produced a 2-inch-thick book that listed high-, medium- and low-priority sites in Iraq related to weapons of mass destruction, according to senior administration officials and members of Congress. Sen. Carl M. Levin (D-Mich.), while chairman of the Armed Services Committee earlier this year, several times asked CIA Director George J. Tenet about how many of the "top suspect sites" had been passed to chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix. The initial transfers of information to U.N. inspectors were limited as U.S. intelligence was measuring the security of Blix's system. In one early case, U.S. intelligence data had been electronically intercepted by Iraq, officials said.

Levin was concerned that only a small number of sites contained in the December list had gone to Blix's team, but at a public hearing in February, Tenet said that all relevant information on high- and moderate-value sites had been shared with the inspectors.

Levin said in an interview that his concern the United States was holding back its best information was heightened by a March 6 letter Tenet sent to Sen. John W. Warner (R-Va.), now Armed Services Committee chairman. In it the CIA director said the United States has "now provided detailed information on all of the high-value and moderate-value sites," as well as "far more than half of these lower-interest sites" to the inspectors.

Levin wrote Tenet back March 7 saying the CIA director gave a "misleading assertion" and repeated a request that Tenet provide a percentage figure, not the number, of the "top suspect sites" listed in the December report that had been turned over to U.N. inspectors. "I can't believe we are holding back, and it would be shocking if it is being done, because it might lead the inspectors to something," Levin said.

A CIA spokesman refused to discuss the matter. But some officials charge the administration is not interested in helping the inspectors discover weapons because a discovery could bolster supporters in the U.N. Security Council of continued inspections and undermine the administration's case for war.

"We don't want to have a smoking gun," a ranking administration official said recently. He added, "I don't know whether the point is to embarrass Blix or embarrass Saddam Hussein."

Another official familiar with the intelligence said, "Not all the top sites have been passed to the inspectors."

A senior intelligence analyst said one explanation for the difficulties inspectors have had in locating weapons caches "is because there may not be much of a stockpile."

Administration officials, in making the case against Iraq, repeatedly have failed to mention the considerable amount of documented weapons destruction that took place in Iraq between 1991 and 1998, when the previous U.N. Special Commission on Iraq had inspection teams in the field.

In that period, under U.N. supervision, Iraq destroyed 817 of 819 proscribed medium-range missiles, 14 launchers, 9 trailers and 56 fixed missile-launch sites. It also destroyed 73 of 75 chemical or biological warheads and 163 warheads for conventional explosives.

U.N. inspectors also supervised destruction of 88,000 filled and unfilled chemical munitions, more than 600 tons of weaponized and bulk chemical weapons agents, 4,000 tons of precursor chemicals and 980 pieces of equipment considered key to production of such weapons.

Destruction of biological weapons -- which were not discovered to be in Iraq's possession until 1995 -- was less advanced. The main facility where biological weapons were produced and developed, Al Hakam, was destroyed along with 60 pieces of equipment taken from three other facilities. In addition, 22 tons of growth media for biological weapons were destroyed.

Staff writer Bob Woodward contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A30601-2003Mar15.html>

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Chicago Tribune

March 16, 2003

Hospital Ready For More Than Casualties

Complex prepares for chemical threat

By Kirsten Scharnberg, Tribune staff reporter

CAMP UDAIRI, Kuwait -- When the sirens began to wail for the weekly Scud missile drill, everyone donned gas masks with practiced speed and ease.

But at the U.S. Army's 86th Combat Support Hospital, a nearly 3-acre labyrinth of connected tents in the heart of camp, responding to the threat of biological or chemical attack is much more complex.

The entire hospital, which is expected to treat most casualties of any war with Iraq, was "bubbled down," completely sealed with an interior airlock system.

A filtering system that works like a giant gas mask began decontaminating every air particle entering the hospital.

And special air-purifying units kicked on, sucking in any dangerous chemicals or spores that could have leaked into the hospital before it was sealed.

"Basically we can envelop ourselves and our patients into an impermeable membrane where the good air stays in and the bad air stays out," said Col. Harry Warren, an orthopedic surgeon and commander of the hospital.

Even with the hospital bubbled down, patients could still be brought inside for treatment during an attack, Warren said.

The process, however, is time-consuming: An injured soldier would first have to be decontaminated of any biological or chemical agents he may have been exposed to and then be passed into the hospital through a special chamber that prevents clean air from leaking out and tainted air from creeping in.

The process takes at least three minutes per patient, so only about 20 wounded soldiers could be admitted per hour.

"Certainly it's not ideal to not be able to get a patient in to a doctor absolutely immediately," Warren said, "but three minutes is pretty fast considering the conditions we would be operating under during such a scenario."

The hospital, a unit of the 101st Airborne from Ft. Campbell, Ky, is believed to be the first combat field hospital impervious to biological or chemical threats. Warren said other such hospitals are being established at U.S. military camps in Kuwait and eventually would be set up in Iraq if there is war.

So far, 24 surgeries have been performed at the hospital, including two on soldiers who received gunshot wounds during live fire exercises. Almost 3,000 other soldiers have been treated since the tent hospital complex was set up over the course of about a week in early January.

And last Wednesday, two nurses stood in a hallway debating whether a Marine who had shot his finger off while leaving the latrine had done it on purpose to get shipped home.

Unlike civilian hospitals, a combat field hospital like the one at Udairi has a large percentage of its beds in intensive-care units.

"The expectancy of getting massive and critical casualties is obviously much greater in a war setting than in even the most dangerous communities in the United States," Warren said.

To support the ICUs and operating rooms, the hospital has a large blood bank, but hospital officials say that if protracted battles produced large numbers of casualties, they could run out of blood fast. Sgt. Eric Story said the hospital has a network of blood banks throughout the U.S. that could ship blood via military jets to the field hospitals.

"All the blood our guys would get would be American," he said.

Aside from its claim of immunity against a biological or chemical attack--something that has never been put to the test--the 86th Combat Support Hospital's other touted advantage is its mobility. Parts of the hospital can be moved within hours to establish field operating rooms close to a battlefield.

"We're mobile," Warren said. "We could put the entire hospital into trucks and move it if we had to."

Walking through the cramped canvas tunnels that serve as corridors between the hospital's dozens of interconnected tents is familiar for Staff Sgt. Louis McSwain, a medic. McSwain was stationed in a field hospital in Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Persian Gulf war, and he remembers nights when remnants of Scud missiles destroyed by U.S. Patriot batteries would fall from the sky and pelt the hospital's roof.

"You feel better knowing this hospital is protected from various bio or chemical agents," he said, "but, really, it's all just a little too close for comfort."

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/features/health/chi-0303160264mar16.1.1535909.story>

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Philadelphia Inquirer

March 16, 2003

U.S. Marines In Kuwait Get Chem/Bio Suits

By Juan O. Tamayo, Knight Ridder News Service

CAMP COMMANDO, Kuwait - In Marine Cpl. Jim Armstrong's worst nightmare, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein does not order the use of chemical and biological weapons until American forces are at the gates to Baghdad.

"If I have to wear this suit from here to Baghdad, I'll be very angry," Armstrong said yesterday as 60,000 Marines in Kuwait tried on their hot and bulky chem/bio protective suits for the first time since arriving.

The drill marked a significant step in war preparations by U.S. ground forces in Kuwait, costing up to \$13 million because the \$211 suits are good for only 120 days after they are removed from their vacuum-sealed bags.

From 8 a.m. to noon, Marines in protective suits shaved, ate breakfast, cleaned their rifles, maintained their equipment and worked in their offices, with gas masks strapped to their waists or within reach.

"Gettin' ready, gettin' ready," one Marine in line for a shower said. "Hope this means we're going north soon, man."

But Armstrong's concern reflected a more critical question facing U.S. war planners: Just when might Hussein's forces first use any weapons of mass destruction, at the beginning of the war or toward the end?

"He's already told the world he doesn't have them, so if he uses them, it's going to be bad for him," said Master Gunnery Sgt. James Forward, head of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) warfare defenses for the First Marine Expeditionary Force.

"On the other hand, if he doesn't use it, he might lose his regime," Forward told a group of U.S. journalists at Camp Commando, headquarters for Gen. James T. Conway, who commands all Marine forces in the Persian Gulf region.

If Hussein does use chemical or biological weapons, where might he use them? Would he hit Basra, the southern city likely to be among the first American targets? Or would he wait until U.S. troops threaten Tikrit, his birthplace and tribal power base? Or until Americans surround Baghdad?

"There's probably a couple of key places where he could use them," Forward said, adding that he coordinated his preparations with the Marines' intelligence branch. He would not say just what those places might be.

Whenever he may use them, U.S. experts say, Hussein's chemical and biological weapons may be disruptive, but not destructive.

"If we have confidence in our gear and we react like we've been trained to react, it will be nothing more than a nuisance, and we'll fight our way through it," a senior Marine Corps expert in NBC warfare said.

American troops will no doubt be encumbered by the jacket-and-pants protective suits, which use a layer of carbon spheres to filter out toxins.

Worn over a flak jacket on an 80-degree day, the suit would raise the temperature inside to 95, Forward said.

Col. John Coleman, the Marine expeditionary force's chief of staff, said he expected that temperatures in southern Iraq would hit 120 in the shade and 140 in the sun within six weeks.

"These things are just hot and bulky. You feel like Gumby," said Armstrong, 21, a Los Angeles native. "I don't know which way I would rather die, choking on nerve gas or dropping from heat exhaustion."

But the same heat that would turn the suits into virtual ovens would also help to more quickly neutralize chemical warfare agents, such as VX nerve gas or mustard gas.

"The trade-off is that it is not going to be as persistent as in a cooler environment," Forward said, adding that he had confidence in the suits and gas masks despite media reports questioning their effectiveness.

The suits are designed to remain effective for more than 24 hours in a contaminated environment, 45 days of wear in clean environments, 120 days after their air-tight bags are opened, and more than 12 years on the shelf.

That is much better than the suits used in the Persian Gulf War in 1991, which weighed almost twice as much, lasted only eight hours in contamination, and left wearers covered in soot from their charcoal liners.

Forward said he had enough stocks to dole out three suits to each Marine in Kuwait. But he acknowledged that many of the suits were not in the preferred desert camouflage colors but rather in the green woodland pattern.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/5404676.htm>

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Philadelphia Inquirer

March 16, 2003

Pigeons Are Taking Up Slack In Case Of War

The birds will be used to detect chemical attacks. Chickens, intended to do the same, died naturally.

By Andrea Gerlin, Inquirer Staff Writer

LIVING SUPPORT AREA 1, Kuwait - The chickens that were shipped here to help provide early warning of a chemical attack didn't work out. They died in the harsh desert conditions last month.

Now the First Marine Division plans to go into battle with 175 homing pigeons. The birds arrived at their units Friday.

Like canaries in mine shafts, the pigeons are expected to be the first to detect chemical weapons if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein orders his troops to use them. The pigeons' condition could help confirm a chemical attack, especially if Hussein sets fire to his country's oil wells. Petroleum fumes often trigger false positives on more high-tech detection equipment.

Staff Sgt. Dan Wallace, the nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) officer for the division's Regimental Combat Team 1, said pigeons showed signs of exposure to deadly chemicals at half the dose lethal to humans. They have a higher respiratory rate than humans and metabolize chemicals faster.

"If all the [birds] are dead and we have people getting runny noses and headaches, we'll know something is wrong," Wallace said. "These are not early-warning mechanisms. This is verification."

"It's just another layer to give us the confidence out there," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Stacy Jaembert, the division's NBC officer.

The chickens died from what Jaembert believes were natural causes, but the pigeons are hardier and expected to fare better. He purchased them from a local bird dealer for about \$55 each, including cages and food and water bowls.

He also bought bags of a mixture of bird food, like granola.

Chief Warrant Officer Jason Gere, First Battalion's NBC officer, said each of eight "maneuver elements" would get a pigeon and would appoint a Marine to feed, water and care for the bird.

So puzzled Marines spent part of Friday morning learning about their newest recruits.

Gere himself had some learning to do. "I don't know anything about pigeons, other than the ones I've run over," he said.

Just how the birds will go to war if called is not decided. The First Battalion's Marines, who form a unit of the First Marine Division, would like to mount the cages atop their Humvees, light-armored vehicles, and amphibious-assault vehicles if they charge into battle.

But Wallace, whom fellow Marines began addressing as Pigeon Master in radio calls Friday, said the pigeons could not take the shock of constant bouncing.

Lt. Col. John Mayer, the battalion's commanding officer, said he expected vehicles to be laden with Marines and their equipment, with no room for birds inside.

"Maybe we can build little windbreaks for their cages," he said. "They need to go outside."

The Marines also argued about what the pigeons should be called. A pigeon assigned to a logistics unit was initially dubbed Cookie, but later became Boudreaux under the influence of five unit members from Louisiana and East Texas.

Other pigeons were christened Outlaw, Trigger, Sarsaparilla, Jackball and Doc, as in "Doc" Holliday.

If the pigeons survive a war, or if there is no war, they face an uncertain future. U.S. Customs restrictions prohibit their entry into the United States.

Wallace suggested that they might be honorably discharged and sent into retirement at an institution such as a school in Kuwait or Iraq.

There were other ideas.

"If we're still here by Thanksgiving," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Russell Johnson, "we'll have to eat them with some dressing."

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/5401046.htm>

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Chicago Tribune

March 15, 2003

U.S., Russia Experts Report 'Dirty Bomb' Experiments

By Tribune news services

VIENNA, AUSTRIA -- In New Mexico's desert and Russia's Ural Mountains, U.S. and Russian experts are experimenting with simulated "dirty bombs" to see how such radiation weapons and potential terrorist tools might work, officials say.

It's a sensitive area in which some information is withheld to keep clues to bomb-building out of terrorists' hands.

But American and Russian specialists attending a global conference in Vienna on dirty bombs disclosed some aspects of recent testing to a reporter.

These so-called RDDs, for radiological dispersal devices, haven't made an appearance, but Al Qaeda terrorist network is reported to have shown a serious interest in developing them.

Dirty bombs would combine conventional explosives with strontium, cesium or some other highly radioactive isotope. They wouldn't immediately cause mass casualties but could cause panic.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0303150086mar15.1.7026048.story>

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Moscow Times

March 18, 2003

Pg. 3

Drinking Problem Seen At Nuke Sites

By Steve Gutterman, Associated Press

Drinking and drug abuse make the danger of accidents and theft at nuclear facilities a severe problem, activists and sociologists said Monday.

Citing what they called a crisis situation in the nuclear industry, members of Greenpeace and other groups urged the government to improve safety and security at existing sites instead of building more nuclear reactors.

President Vladimir Putin stressed the importance of the nuclear sector for defense and power needs in January, and the Nuclear Power Ministry said two years ago that it wanted to build 20 new reactors by 2020 and double reliance on nuclear power -- which now accounts for about 14 percent of the country's electricity.

At the same time, "Every day, every month, every year, we see less and less attention to the human factor," upon which "the safety of our country depends to a decisive degree," said Gennady Denisovsky, of the Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

That inattention is a risky mistake, Denisovsky and others said at a news conference, painting a picture of a nuclear industry beset by alcoholism and drug addiction -- and leadership that not only fails to address these problems but aggravates them.

"A nuclear power plant does not fight alcoholism, it propagates alcoholism," said Vladimir Lupandin, also with the Institute of Sociology.

"Alcoholics are advantageous for nuclear power plants -- they are modest and undemanding, they can work where all norms of sanitary safety are violated, and they can be fired at any time," he said.

He said drug abuse is also a problem because of the high stress of responsible jobs at nuclear facilities.

Nadezhda Kutepova, director of the Planet of Hopes activist group, said that "alcoholism is broadly common" at Mayak, a nuclear processing plant.

In Ozyorsk, the Ural Mountains city where Mayak is located, "people sitting with a can of beer on the bus on the way to work, people working with hangovers -- this is the norm."

She said that in 1999, Ozyorsk recorded the highest per capita growth in drug addiction in the country, and that the drinking problem developed in part because of the Soviet-era teaching that alcohol helps counter radioactive substances.

Last year, 45 cases of drunkenness on the job were recorded at Mayak, and 11 people were fired, Kutepova said. But she believes those statistics -- at a facility where she said workers could drink from containers of alcohol on the job during Soviet times -- are the tip of the iceberg.

She said closed cities should be opened to increase accountability.

"In closed cities there is a 'collective guarantee' system of internal relations, under which violations are simply covered up because nobody wants them to get out," Kutepova said.

"The majority of people in leadership positions protect their employees when they find them under the influence," she said.

The Nuclear Power Ministry says the industry has a very good safety record, and ministry spokesman Nikolai Shingaryov said Monday that alcohol and drug abuse are less prevalent in cities housing nuclear facilities than elsewhere.

He said abuse among employees in responsible positions is nonexistent.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/03/18/013.html>

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Washington Post

March 18, 2003

Pg. 23

Anthrax Response Plans Inadequate, Study Warns

Modeling of Bio-Attack on Large City Predicts Mass Casualties Without Prior Distribution of Antibiotics

By Rick Weiss, Washington Post Staff Writer

A little more than two pounds of anthrax spores spilled into the air over a city the size of New York could be expected to kill more than 120,000 people unless state and federal officials respond much more aggressively than they currently plan to, according to the first comprehensive computer model of such a terrorist act.

The new analysis concludes that health officials should rethink the current plan to distribute antibiotics only after an attack. Tens of thousands of lives could be saved, the study predicts, if people could stockpile the drugs in their homes.

The report also is critical of the rush to deploy "biosensors" to detect an attack. Sensors are pricey and in most settings would save few lives compared with improvements in drug distribution for those exposed, the analysis found.

The model, crafted by a trio of university researchers, uses medical details from the U.S. anthrax attacks in 2001, data from the former Soviet Union's anthrax program and the latest in "queue theory," which allows researchers to compare outcomes when products (such as pills) are distributed in various ways to people waiting in line.

Speed is crucial following an anthrax attack because, unlike smallpox, the disease progresses within just a few days to a stage that is nearly 100 percent fatal even with intensive care.

Although people with early symptoms can be saved, the hospital beds, ventilators and pulmonary specialists needed to save them are in relatively short supply. So, unlike the case in 2001, when every patient received intensive care, many of these patients would die. By contrast, everyone who takes appropriate antibiotics before symptoms arise can expect to survive.

"The person in charge, whether it's the president or whoever, needs to push the button really quickly," said Lawrence Wein, the Stanford Business School professor who led the research, published in yesterday's online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "We can't sit around a day or two waiting for confirmatory reports that this is indeed anthrax. Every day that it takes you to get the antibiotics started, you lose another 10,000 people."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said it can fly anthrax medicines (doxycycline or ciprofloxacin, brand name Cipro) to any U.S. city within seven hours. But getting it from the local airport to people's mouths can take days.

To see how distribution plans might affect the number of casualties, Wein and colleagues Edward Kaplan of Yale University and David Craft of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology created a computer program accounting for dozens of factors, from wind speed to the amount of air taken into a person's lungs per minute.

The model presumes a release of 2.2 pounds of anthrax bacteria -- a million billion spores -- 325 feet above a city of 10.8 million, with an additional 700,000 people in suburban areas. It predicts 1.5 million infections in an area 120 miles long and 11 miles wide.

After 48 hours -- the time to become aware of the attack, mobilize the CDC's pharmaceutical stockpile, set up drug distribution centers and get the first pills into people's mouths -- 12,700 people would already be sick, with 17 at the incurable stage.

Under current plans to serve 9,000 people at each neighborhood center, it would take four days to get the pills to everyone and 123,700 would die.

Lines would be shorter under a policy that offered pills only to those with symptoms, but that would be a huge mistake, the model shows, resulting in a total of 600,000 deaths. Under a compromise policy in which only those exhibiting symptoms are treated until 7 percent of the population has symptoms, after which everyone gets treated, the final death toll would be about 250,000.

If people had the antibiotics at home and no one had to wait on line, the death count would be about 60,000, the model predicts.

That number remains high in part because history shows that many people won't take the pills for the full 60 days needed to ensure effectiveness. And if compliance drops even 10 percent, the model shows, the death toll would increase 50 percent.

A policy allowing stockpiling has "equity problems," Wein conceded, because the wealthy can better afford to do so. But the poor would be helped too, he said, because the lines would be that much shorter.

But Richard Besser, who oversees anthrax preparedness for the CDC, is not sold. Many people might take the pills unnecessarily, he said, either because of a false alarm or to treat an infection for which less powerful drugs should be used. That could exacerbate the already problematic increase in drug-resistant bacteria.

"We're not averse to revisiting assumptions," Besser said, "but it's very concerning when large amounts of broad-spectrum antibiotics are in people's medicine cabinets."

Thomas Inglesby, deputy director of Johns Hopkins University's Center for Civilian Biodefense Studies, echoed that concern and noted that the study scenario, though not entirely unlikely, is extreme. "Anthrax attacks can happen in lots of ways," he said, "and most of them would be far far smaller than this."

He said the study is a good reminder that the nation still has no program in place by which it can rate community and state preparedness for an anthrax attack.

Glenn F. Webb, a Vanderbilt University medical modeler, countered that the analysis is conservative in that it assumes everything goes smoothly and that panic and disorder do not slow the process.

Wein recommends setting up teams of trained health professionals who could fly into affected areas to boost drug distribution rates. With one provider for every 700 people, he said, the death toll could drop to 1,000.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A42379-2003Mar17.html>

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New Yorker

March 24, 2003

Talk of the Town

Unembedded

I began to have real doubts about going through with my mission to "embed," as a journalist with the United States Marines, when a reporter raised the unexpected question "What do I do if I barf inside my gas mask?"

The question was perfectly serious—nausea can be one of the first symptoms of a chemical attack—but the young lieutenant who was leading the seminar, on a tennis court at the Hilton Kuwait Resort, had obviously never been forced to consider this situational fine point. "That would be a problem," the lieutenant said. "If you vomit liquid, you'll just want to clear it by pushing this and blowing hard through that." He grasped his gas mask and fingered the outlet valve for all of us to see. "But if you've got spew chunks, they could clog the valve and you'd . . . well, you'd be a goner."

As I followed this conversation, I was wearing my own gas mask, breathing in its stale rubbery essence and trying to imagine how I would react in the Iraqi desert when the first chemical alarm sounded. There were approximately fifty journalists on the tennis court, hunched in little seminars of ten under the smiting Arabian sun. We were here to receive our “N.B.C. training” (Nuclear, Biological, Chemical), and we had only moments ago been issued our masks, medicines, and charcoal-lined chemsuits in brown plastic garbage bags. The lieutenant insisted that we practice donning our masks until we could perform the procedure, eyes shut, in nine seconds or less. It should become part of our “muscle memory,” he said. Out in the desert, an alarm would sound and we would hear, “Gas! Gas! Gas!”—the cry always going out in threes. “Your first instinct when you hear the alarm will be to get one last little breath,” our instructor said, inhaling sharply. “But if we’re in a cloud of nerve agent that’s just what it’ll be—your last breath.”

If, after successfully securing the mask, we began to experience any of the telltale signs of nerve-agent poisoning—such as profuse drooling, a sudden intense headache, or a general confusion “about who you are”—we were immediately to medicate ourselves with the “auto-injectors” provided in our kits. I opened my bag and studied one of the little plastic syringes. It was filled with an antidote called atropine and equipped with a tightly coiled interior spring that was strong enough to plunge the needle through several layers of clothing and into the deep tissue of the thigh. In an emergency, we were supposed to hold the auto-injector firmly against our flanks for a good ten seconds, as the atropine slowly drained into our bloodstream.

For the rest of the seminar, as we practiced other unmentionables, I sat there on the tennis court, breathing thinly in my mask, wondering how our sad, tense world had come to this.

It had been a long, queasy week for the five hundred journalists waiting to embed with the U.S. armed forces in Kuwait. For many, including those who, like me, were scheduled to join up with the Marines, there had been repeated scheduling delays and snafus that had pushed back by more than a week our promised rendezvous with the soldiers who were camped in undisclosed locations in the sandy wastelands near the Iraqi border. We were told to return to our various hotels, lie low, and wait for a phone call. For some, this extra week was a reprieve, but for most of us it was a curse, especially in a country without alcohol.

A paranoid, they say, is a person in possession of the facts. Maybe I was becoming paranoid, but the information I was gathering all around me was unsettling at best. The Kuwait Times was filled with stories on dirty bombs, suitcase bombs, smallpox, drone aircraft, Vx, sarin gas, and all the other nasty tricks that Saddam may or may not have planned for us. A crack team of N.B.C. experts from the Czech Republic could be seen around town in their rubber suits, monitoring the air.

At restaurants and spontaneously arranged hotel parties around town, journalists spooked one another with biochemical ghost stories. We were going to be right there with the soldiers, experiencing whatever hardships and horrors were happening on the ground. There was a disturbing circular argument behind this conflict: The war’s stated purpose was, in large part, to prove to the world that Saddam had weapons of mass destruction; if he really had them, and no one doubted that he did, it seemed only logical to believe that he was going to use them, especially when cornered. This invasion was thus designed to root out the very weapons we hoped—and at the same time feared—that he possessed. And we journalists were coming along not only to witness any chemical nastiness that might ensue but also, presumably, to breathe it.

With this embed program, the Department of Defense was embarking on a public-relations experiment of unprecedented size and scope. It remained to be seen how much latitude would be afforded the media once the bullets began flying, but by the look of things the Pentagon truly wanted us to be right there on the battlefield, free and unfettered, reporting precisely what we saw.

Still, I had trouble fathoming why an Administration that had shown no particular concern for world opinion in the previous months would go to such lengths to accommodate so many journalists. One military officer at the Hilton privately suggested an answer: “We want you here to document the gas and the other stuff Saddam has in his arsenal. If he has it, or, God forbid, uses it, the world’s not going to believe the U.S. Army. But they’ll believe you.” This, the more I thought about it, was not a very encouraging reason to be here. As the day of the embed drew closer, I began to feel like a lab rat, heading off for great chemical experiments.

For the most part, the embeds worked by luck of the draw. My embed slot was one of the sexy ones—quite possibly the sexiest. I was to be with the Reconnaissance Battalion of the 1st Marine Division. First Recon was basically the front line. Wherever its men were was likely to be the most dangerous spot in the Marine “battle space.” As I milled among the other journalists—many of them hardened war correspondents and military geeks—I was repeatedly congratulated on my good fortune. They said things like “First Recon, aye, the able-bodied killers,” “Lots of action,” and “You’re gonna get some real good stuff out there.” One guy just raised his eyebrows and said, “You got a death wish?”

The last straw, for me, was a little session the Marines held the day before the embed buses were scheduled to take us away. The seminar was run by a blunt, amicable jarhead, a Sergeant Parks, who launched right into a description of what might happen if we were “slimed” by a “snowstorm,” the operative term for a toxic cloud in the new military parlance. Parks related how a victim of a chemical attack would lapse into intense, twitching convulsions, which he likened to “doing the funky chicken.” The nerve agents could be hurled at us in any number of ways, he said: drone aircraft, short-range surface-to-surface missiles, Scuds, mortar shells, artillery rounds, even chemical mines. As a matter of policy, the armed forces were proceeding on the prudent assumption that every incoming round contained chemical agents until proved otherwise; consequently, we could expect to wear our chemsuits—which were cumbersome, clammy, and inordinately hot—most of the way to Baghdad. Parks then gave us color commentary on the effects of the various blistering agents that Saddam might use. “If you ingest mustard gas,” he said, “it will cause horrible sores that will eat right through your esophagus.” He said he’d seen photographs of skin blisters “as big as my hand.” Then he amended the description: “Not just blisters, but blisters on top of blisters. Thing is, if you try to lance them they just keep on growing.” Some blistering agents, he said, cause the skin to blow up in hideous cauliflowers of deformity. “This one victim’s hand looked just like Jiffy Pop,” Parks said. That was quite enough for me. I stopped taking serious notes at this point, and simply wrote, in large, definitive letters, “We’re fucked.” I knew then and there that I couldn’t go through with this. Although I had nothing but respect for the United States Marines, I had not signed a contract and was, I’d almost forgotten, free to leave. This seemed like a good time. I told Captain Joe Plenzler, the marine in charge, “No offense, but I can’t do this.” And, as I did so, I was struck by an almost desperate desire to go back—not only back home to my wife and three children but back in time, back to the days of bull markets and meaningful alliances and guiltless French wine. I turned in my chemsuit, my atropine injectors, and my mask. I was immensely relieved to learn that it wasn’t too late. I wished Captain Plenzler Godspeed and good luck. An hour later, I saw the embed buses pull out of the Hilton’s parking lot and chuff north, toward the Iraqi border.

— *Hampton Sides*

http://www.newyorker.com/talk/content/?030324ta_talk_sides

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New York Times
March 19, 2003

U.S. Mobile Labs Are Poised to Hunt Iraqi Arms

By Judith Miller

KUWAIT, March 18 — The Bush administration has deployed mobile labs and new specialized teams of intelligence officials and disarmament experts to Kuwait to help the military search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq as soon as war begins, according to senior administration officials.

Defense officials are also reaching out to former international weapons inspectors, as part of an ambitious top-secret effort to rapidly find, secure and ultimately destroy the caches of chemical, biological and other unconventional weapons the administration asserts President Saddam Hussein is hiding.

In recent interviews, officials described the plans as one of the most delicate and crucial missions of the war against Iraq. Never before, they said, had the United States proposed to disarm a nation of unconventional weapons by force.

The Pentagon has deployed several new tactical units called mobile exploitation teams, or MET's, with state-of-the-art equipment and novel tactics to locate and survey at least 130 and as many as 1,400 possible weapons sites.

In addition, officials said the military was planning to find and interview hundreds of Iraqi scientists who worked on germ, chemical or nuclear-related projects, and to seek their cooperation in disarming Iraq of the weapons that the United Nations required Mr. Hussein to destroy after the Persian Gulf war in 1991.

The administration has assigned top priority to the hunt for weapons of mass destruction, officials said. After months of relatively fruitless international inspections, the discovery of such arms, officials said, would vindicate the administration's decision to go to war to disarm Iraq. Conversely, failure to find them would leave the administration vulnerable to charges that it had started a war needlessly.

Administration officials are determined to find illegal weapons before Mr. Hussein can send them out of the country and perhaps sell them to other rogue nations or terrorist groups.

The American plans to eliminate illegal Iraqi arms were drawn up independently of United Nations weapons inspections and reflect the Bush administration's belief that those inspections would never succeed in disarming Iraq

in the face of Mr. Hussein's resistance. The inspectors withdrew from Iraq today after Secretary General Kofi Annan ordered their evacuation.

Maj. Gen. James A. Marks, a senior Army intelligence officer in the Iraq operation who helped draft overall plans for the hunt for unconventional weapons, said the mission was challenging because Mr. Hussein has had more than a decade to find ways of hiding them.

"He's the master of where's the pea," General Marks said.

Senior national security aides approved the concept of the mission at a White House meeting almost two months ago and put the Pentagon in charge of it. Two mobile labs that can analyze chemical and biological samples in less than 24 hours with 90 percent confidence were recently sent to Kuwait.

The Defense Department has assembled teams of highly trained disarmament and technical experts from several different Pentagon offices — organized in the mobile exploitation teams — who will accompany troops with a special mandate to hunt for unconventional weapons.

On the teams are small units of intelligence analysts and technical and security experts, whose goal is to locate sites, take samples and interview Iraqi scientists who have had central roles in Iraq's weapons programs.

In the last two weeks, the Pentagon has made contact with several former international inspectors who worked for the now-extinct United Nations Special Commission, or Unscm, which conducted inspections in Iraq from 1991 through December 1998. Administration officials are asking them to join the specialized Pentagon teams and help the military spot hidden storage and production sites, collect documents about the programs and identify and interview crucial Iraqi scientists as well as military and security officials who might know where such weapons have been made or may be stored.

The Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, which is charged with carrying out the military's plans for its weapons hunt, has printed some 9,000 booklets to help front-line troops identify suspect facilities and dangerous chemicals, germs and other materials.

The booklets, small enough to be tucked away in a soldier's pocket and printed on sturdy waterproof paper, also instruct soldiers about how to handle such dangerous material, and outline proper procedures for isolating and securing such sites.

Administration officials said there were still no precise estimates of the mission's scope or how much it would ultimately cost.

"We are doing the most careful planning we can in light of the large number of unknowns," said Douglas J. Feith, under secretary of defense for policy. "People who are demanding precision now are being unrealistic."

Defense Department officials describe the effort as unique. The plans draw upon lessons learned from the war against terrorism in Afghanistan, where for example, a mobile lab was first deployed at some 60 sites. But the officials say they have never before undertaken such an ambitious "search and destroy" mission for unconventional weapons.

"We're going to hit some dry holes; they know we're coming," said Lisa Bronson, assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, whose office is overseeing the project.

The plans, officials stressed, are still evolving. Defense officials said they were told only in December to draw up plans to "rapidly disable" unconventional weapons production and storage sites. And the Defense Threat Reduction Agency was officially charged with responsibility for carrying out the mission only about two weeks ago.

The White House and defense planners decided less than three weeks ago that it could be useful to include former international arms inspectors on the military teams. A formal decision to do so has still not been made. But five inspectors, all of whom asked not to be identified, said they were asked about joining the mission within the last 10 days. A few of them said they were still trying to get their employers' permission to join the mission.

Though the White House officially blessed the outlines of the mission about eight weeks ago, planning for the hunt began at the Pentagon last July, officials said. In August, the Pentagon-operated National Defense University in Washington held a secret meeting to consider how best to go about disarming Iraq. In September, former inspectors of the old Unscm met with officials from several Pentagon offices, including the Central Command in Tampa, Fla., to discuss the lessons learned from the inspectors' eight-year effort to disarm Iraq of unconventional weapons.

Senior officials said the disarmament teams included veterans of the Cooperative Threat Reduction programs that worked to disarm former Soviet germ, chemical and nuclear weapons facilities. Other experts have investigated Iraqi weapons programs as intelligence analysts for a decade. Others are seasoned chemists, biologists and other experts experienced in sampling and modern lab techniques. Still others are linguists and students of Iraqi and Arab culture.

"You can't send amateurs to do this job," an official said.

Tension persists, however, between the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon over how intelligence and technical experts should be used. The Pentagon has been given the lead in hunting for Iraqi weapons, but C.I.A. experts will not be included in the mobile exploitation teams, officials said, and will have a separate effort.

White House and Pentagon policy planners say disarming Iraq will involve four basic stages, the first two while the fighting is still under way. At first, sites, documents and scientists will be quickly assessed for information that can protect troops and civilians. The second stage will focus on securing and disabling weapons sites. The third and fourth stages will prepare sites for destruction or long-term monitoring.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/international/middleeast/19WEAP.html>

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Los Angeles Times

March 19, 2003

U.S. Claims 90% Hit Rate In Missile Plan

A defense system expected to be set up in Alaska next year would intercept most rockets fired from North Korea, a Pentagon official says.

By Greg Miller, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON -- A rudimentary missile defense system set to be installed in Alaska next year would be able to intercept and destroy North Korean nuclear warheads fired at American cities, a top Pentagon official testified Tuesday.

Undersecretary of Defense Edward "Pete" Aldridge said on Capitol Hill that the system, expected to be operational by the end of next year, would be "90%" effective in intercepting missiles fired from the Korean peninsula.

Aldridge's surprising claim -- which was immediately challenged by lawmakers -- could add to the tensions between the U.S. and North Korea. Relations between the two countries have been near crisis since Pyongyang admitted last year that it had restarted its nuclear program.

Aldridge, the Pentagon's top weapons acquisition official, said the capability would give President Bush "many more options" in confronting the Pyongyang regime. He did not elaborate.

Appearing before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Aldridge and other Pentagon officials backed away from a Defense Department proposal that would have exempted the missile system from ordinary weapons testing requirements.

The hearing marked the latest in a long series of heated exchanges on Capitol Hill over the missile defense system, a program first advocated by President Reagan in the 1980s.

For years, the program was criticized as too costly, unlikely to be effective and destined to alienate allies and other nations opposed to the effort.

But the program has been a top priority of the Bush administration and is poised to receive billions of dollars in additional funding.

Aldridge's claim about the system's capability was greeted with disbelief from lawmakers and missile defense experts, who noted that the system has had meager success in intercepting missiles even in highly controlled tests.

Sen. Carl Levin of Michigan, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the claim was "exaggerated" and out of line with previous estimates that the Pentagon has provided in classified documents.

"You better go back and check the classified numbers," Levin said. "I think you'll want to correct the record after you read the classified numbers."

Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.) also was incredulous and pressed Aldridge on whether he would make the same claim to the president if faced with an attack by North Korea.

Confronted with "the possibility of the North Koreans hitting Los Angeles or San Francisco with a nuclear warhead, you are advising [the president] that we would have a 90% chance of taking that down?" Bayh asked. "If millions of lives depend on it, that's your answer?"

Aldridge replied, "Yes, sir."

Experts also questioned the claim. Philip E. Coyle, who was the chief Pentagon weapons inspector during the Clinton administration, noted that in tests over the Pacific in recent years, interceptors have struck U.S.-fired target missiles only five times in eight tries.

Those predawn tests, often visible from Southern California, are stacked to increase the likelihood of success. The target missiles are fitted with beacons that make them easier for the interceptors to find. And the interceptors are preprogrammed with data on the target missile's intended path.

"North Korea wouldn't send a missile with a beacon on it," Coyle said.

As part of the next phase in the development of the missile defense system, the Pentagon is planning to install 10 interceptors in silos at Ft. Greeley, about 100 miles southeast of Fairbanks, Alaska.

The plan would appear to violate laws requiring new weapons systems to be subject to operational testing before they are deployed -- laws designed to guard against the Pentagon putting expensive weapons systems in place only to find that they don't work.

But Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has argued that the missile defense system is such a high national security priority that its testing and deployment should be simultaneous.

The Pentagon recently appeared to be seeking to exempt the system from operational testing entirely when language was slipped into a spending bill that would have created a waiver for the program. Aldridge and others insisted that the matter was a misunderstanding and agreed to remove the language from the bill.

The system that is expected to be put in place next year is the first stage in an ambitious program that could eventually include interceptors and laser systems on aircraft and in space.

Rumsfeld and others have argued that North Korea's activities have increased the importance of moving swiftly to put a missile defense system in place.

In testimony last month, Rumsfeld said the North Koreans "very likely do have a two-stage [rocket] with a kick-motor capability which could reach the United States." Intelligence reports have said North Korea is developing a three-stage rocket that could reach the U.S. mainland.

By mid-decade, Iran also could have a missile capable of reaching the United States, said J.D. Crouch, assistant secretary of Defense for international security.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-missile19mar19,1,6215929.story>

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Washington Post

March 19, 2003

Pg. 23

Panel Urges U.S.-N. Korea Talks

Varied Group of Experts Criticizes Bush Administration Policy

By Doug Struck, Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, March 18 -- A group of prominent U.S. experts on Korea has challenged the Bush administration's rejection of direct negotiations with North Korea, saying the United States should begin talks to test the communist government's willingness to give up its nuclear program.

The group includes four former ambassadors, three former top-ranking military officers, missile experts, academics and specialists who have offered a strategy to break the deadlock between Washington and the North Korean government in Pyongyang.

The administration has said it will not negotiate until North Korea agrees to dismantle its programs to develop nuclear weapons, and then will talk only in a multinational group. Pyongyang insists on direct negotiations with Washington.

"There was division on the task force about whether it was too late to try to negotiate with North Korea," said the chairman of the group, Selig S. Harrison, director of the Asia Program at the Center for International Policy, a Washington research organization.

But to discover what is possible, he said, "there was complete agreement that the first steps have to be in direct, bilateral negotiations between North Korea and the United States."

The group, which Harrison called an "attempt to bring together the people in the country who know most about Korea," added its voice to calls from a small but growing number of ranking Republicans and Democrats in Congress. They have urged the administration to soften its refusal to engage in direct negotiations.

But the task force, co-sponsored by the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Chicago, also suggested that concern over North Korea's nuclear and missile programs has become overblown.

The group's report noted that the CIA's initial estimate in 1993 that North Korea might have the fuel for two nuclear bombs has become commonly accepted. "Yet the reality is that the United States does not know" how much plutonium North Korea has or whether it has been made into a weapon, the report said.

Furthermore, U.S. suggestions that North Korea may soon have a ballistic missile capable of threatening the United States are premature, the task force said.

"There are a lot of uncertainties to putting together a missile like that," said task force member David Wright, a global security expert with the Union of Concerned Scientists, an advocacy group. North Korea has not tested such a long-range missile and "they couldn't just assume that if they constructed one and put it on the launchpad, it would work," he said in a telephone interview.

Although some of the 28 people who signed the report have declared themselves critics of the Bush administration's stance on North Korea, the task force is noteworthy for its wide membership.

Members include retired Navy Adm. William J. Crowe Jr., who was chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under President Ronald Reagan; retired Air Force Brig. Gen. James F. Grant, who headed U.S. Army intelligence in South Korea; and retired Air Force Col. John E. Endicott, former head of strategic studies at National Defense University. Also on the task force were former U.S. ambassadors to South Korea James T. Laney and Donald P. Gregg; arms control expert and former ambassador James E. Goodby, and former assistant secretary of state Robert L. Gallucci. To try to resolve the impasse with North Korea, the group recommended a step-by-step negotiation. The verified dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program would be met in stages with assistance in food and energy needs and eventually normalization of political and economic relations.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49092-2003Mar18.html>

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Washington Post

March 19, 2003

Pg. 17

Russian Deputies Shelve Treaty

Arms Control Postponed to Protest U.S. War Plans

By Sharon LaFraniere, Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, March 18 -- The lower house of the Russian parliament today put off a vote on ratification of an arms control treaty with the United States after angry legislators accused the Bush administration of setting the stage for a world war.

Leaders of the lower house, the State Duma, said the dramatic cuts in nuclear warheads envisioned under the treaty should not be considered at a time when the United States has flouted international law and tried to strong-arm countries, such as Russia, that objected to its policy on Iraq. The vote had been scheduled for Friday.

The Duma speaker, Gennady Seleznev, who until recently was a Communist Party member, suggested the accord might be shelved indefinitely if the United States invaded Iraq, because an attack would usher in "the law of the jungle" in international relations.

"The strong will trample the weak. And we don't want to be weak. Therefore, we will still need the missiles," he said.

Other lawmakers predicted that the treaty would be approved, perhaps as soon as the Duma resumes work on April 1 after a break. "The deputies are angry," said Sergei Shishkaryov, deputy head of the foreign affairs committee. "But they still understand how important this treaty is for Russia."

When they signed the treaty last May, President Bush and his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, cast it as a dramatic sign of the improvement in U.S.-Russian relations since the end of the Cold War. The three-page agreement commits both countries to reduce their nuclear warheads by roughly two-thirds, from 6,000 warheads apiece to between 1,700 and 2,200. Russia pushed hard for the cuts in large part because it can no longer afford to maintain its stockpile.

The U.S. Senate unanimously approved the agreement March 6 as part of an effort by the Bush administration to encourage Russia not to block a U.N. resolution that would have authorized a military strike on Iraq. Putin opposed the now-moot resolution but still tried to preserve the spirit of good will that has prevailed between the two countries since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.

The Duma typically follows instructions from Putin's office in the Kremlin obediently. But in this case, deputies put Putin's wishes aside to vent their unhappiness over U.S. policy on Iraq and, some analysts said, to win points with voters before parliamentary elections in December.

"This is a silly thing because our relations with the United States are not simple and there is a threat that they will deteriorate," said Vladimir Ryzhkov, an independent Duma deputy. "Now it would be important to give a positive signal, not a negative one."

The Kremlin had no immediate comment, but Mikhail Margelov, an influential lawmaker close to the Kremlin, said the Duma had voted against Russia's interests.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49332-2003Mar18.html>

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Christian Science Monitor
March 19, 2003

Iraq Flexes Its Military Trump Card

A US military official said Monday that an Iraqi unit may have been equipped with chemical weapons.

By Philip Smucker, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

KUWAIT CITY – As the US confrontation with Iraq approaches a military climax, Saddam Hussein's final poker hand may pack a chemical or biological "wild card." British and US military officials wonder aloud if it will arrive with the "bang" of an altered warhead of an Al Samoud missile, in the "pow" of an artillery round, or even in the hand-delivered "poof" of a plastic grenade thrown by a civilian.

For many of the 130,000 US troops packed cheek-to-jowl on bases in Kuwait, fears of an Iraqi chemical or biological attack trump concern about Mr. Hussein's dilapidated conventional armed forces. American soldiers huddled after live-fire exercises for final pep talks yesterday amid reminders of their mission to defang one of the world's most notorious dictators.

At the same time, US forces massing on the border may present a tempting target for the Iraqi leader if he decides to strike first.

A senior defense official in Washington said Monday that US intelligence had detected signs - but no solid proof - that an Iraqi Republican Guard unit south of Baghdad had been given chemical munitions.

As fears of anthrax and nerve-gas attacks heightened here, Kuwaiti citizens dashed for army-supply stores to buy gas masks and duct tape. Many of them appeared as panicked and confused about what they might face, similar to American citizens last month when a rush to buy such supplies hit the shores of the US.

President Bush asked most of the world this week to "show your cards," but the only player who matters now is Saddam Hussein.

A high-level US Marines "War Gaming" report, obtained by the Monitor through official Marine channels, suggests that the US response to an initial chemical weapons attack could well be "limited in scope."

The report of the "Marine Corps War Fighting Laboratory: Project Fast Train," a brainstorming session of active and former military leaders and planners held at Quantico, Va., stated: "The US must carefully consider its reaction to a first use of chemical weapons. An overreaction could make desired postwar objectives [which include restabilizing Iraq and installing some form of representative rule] very difficult to achieve, especially if it was an inadvertent or rogue release."

A British military official in Kuwait City, speaking on condition of anonymity, says, however, that the "rogue" elements lining up to release chemical weapons are likely already under the control of Hussein - and also could be in civilian clothes in big cities.

"If he has this stuff and has no real efficient means to deliver it, what better way than to fire chemicals by hand out of windows at close range in balloon-like containers," he says. An "inadvertent release," he adds, is far less likely. Some Western military officials insist that anthrax and VX nerve gas are a commodities that the Iraqi dictator is likely to unleash early in his campaign to resist a US-led invasion. Not all the key players in this high-stakes gamble, however, subscribe to the widely held US theory, espoused by former NATO Supreme Commander Wesley Clark, that Hussein will quickly "use them or lose them."

British Col. Chris Vernon says that Hussein is likely to hold and hide his chemicals until late in a war, if and when US and British troops besiege Baghdad. "He won't want to show he has them early, because he thinks that if he can hold off the allied advance, he still might negotiate a deal," he says. "British intelligence reports suggest, however, that he will use chemical weapons as a last resort."

Hussein could expect most diplomatic opposition to a US attack to evaporate if his regime used chemical or biological weapons. France's ambassador to the US declared yesterday that French opposition to a war against Iraq could vanish as soon as the Iraqi military fires the first volley of chemical agents at US and British forces.

But if Hussein has no chemical weapons - as French officials have speculated - some Western analysts say that the US and Britain will lose political ground in a war whose essential goal has been stated as: "To disarm Saddam of his dangerous weapons of mass destruction."

Even if the Iraqi Army has stockpiles of chemicals as Washington and London claim, its ability to deliver them has been called into question by former cabinet minister Robin Cook, who resigned from the government of Prime Minister Tony Blair late Monday night with an impassioned speech against the war.

But fears of an imminent chemical attack were enough yesterday to spark a run on a Kuwait City's main military supply center. Cashiers said that nearly 600 gas masks sold out after Mr. Bush issued an ultimatum for Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq.

Edai Tala shopped for last-minute supplies with his wife, El Ganin, who says she is preparing several special rooms with plastic and duct tape for her family of 21, each of whom now has a gas mask, to hunker down in. Mrs. Tala says she isn't really sure if Hussein has chemical weapons, mostly because she thinks he would have used them on Kuwait already if he did.

Still, even as she talks of her fears, her views appear to change. "Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei [senior UN weapons inspectors] haven't found anything yet, but I still think he has something," she says. "I mean, I'm just hoping that if he does, the US military will be able to intercept them as they fly through the sky."

But despite an overwhelming dislike for Hussein and the real threat that he represents to Kuwait, not all Kuwaitis have lined up in the prowar camp.

Many fear that aggravating the Iraqi dictator could be worse than trying to live alongside him. Iraq, which invaded Kuwait in 1990, sparking the 1991 Gulf War, has said it will retaliate against any country hosting invasion forces. "Why provoke the old man?" asks Abdur Wahab, who was also shopping for last-minute supplies. "He may be just waiting for this opportunity."

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0319/p06s01-woiq.html>

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Baltimore Sun
March 18, 2003

Battelle Opens 16-Lab Complex Near Aberdeen Proving Ground

Center has ability to work with viral, bacterial perils

By Lane Harvey Brown, Sun Staff

Battelle officially opened its Eastern Science and Technology Center in Aberdeen yesterday, placing the Ohio nonprofit research and development firm in a prime location for military, biotechnology and pharmaceutical work. The \$20 million laboratory, office and conference space employs 200 scientists and researchers who work primarily on biological and chemical defense but also conduct engineering and technology research.

"This is the first of many phases for Battelle," said J. Thomas Sadowski, Harford County's director of economic development. "We now have two billion-dollar research organizations in the county, Aberdeen Proving Ground and Battelle. I think that says it all."

He said the county government has been working for five years with the state, business and higher education officials to build a Harford high-technology corridor.

Battelle's decision to build in Aberdeen's Higher Education and Applied Technology Center further strengthens that public-private partnership. "This is a significant step in that regard," Sadowski said.

Battelle's presence in Harford County has grown from two people in 1986 to 325 today, many of whom work in the labs at the Army's Aberdeen Proving Ground, said Warren Mullins, vice president of business development at the Battelle center.

The new 80,000-square-foot center has 16 labs, including a Biosafety Level 3 suite, the second-highest grade, which will allow it to work with dangerous viral and bacterial agents, officials said yesterday.

Among those attending the opening were workers and officials from Battelle, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Harford County and the state, as well as federal lawmakers.

Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes, a Maryland Democrat, called the complex's opening "another important step in establishing Maryland as one of the premier locations" for high technology business.

Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. said after the ceremony that with another round of military base realignments and closings planned for 2005, the ties between nonprofit Battelle and the proving ground "absolutely" reinforce the military post's viability and help the state make its case for keeping the base open.

Battelle, based in Columbus, Ohio, and the national labs it manages or co-manages have 16,000 employees.

<http://www.sunspot.net/business/bal-bz.battelle18mar18.story>

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Bioterrorism Test Scheduled Over Central Oklahoma

Tue Mar 18, 3:14 PM ET

The U.S. Army's multimission sensor test, initially scheduled to start in February, will begin March 24 in the Canadian River basin in Oklahoma, the U.S. Army announced Monday.

The test was delayed after citizens' complaints that the use of egg white powder may cause allergic reactions in some residents. As a result of the complaints, the Army eliminated the use of bacillus thuringiensis (BT) from the test, Brig. Gen. Stephen Reeves said.

"We want residents to be comfortable with the test, and we want to be good neighbors while performing it," Reeves said.

During the exercise, test pilots will use crop-dusting equipment to disseminate materials selected to simulate a chemical threat on some areas. Ethanol and a -to-1 solution of polyethylene glycol (PEG) 200 and water will be released and clay dust will be used to simulate a biological threat.

Chemical and biological simulants are routinely used in detection and protection capability studies conducted by the Department of Defense ([news - web sites](#)). These simulants have been selected for their ability to represent a spectrum of possible chemical and biological threats while protecting human health and the environment.

The testing will help determine whether various radar systems located in the vicinity of the Canadian River basin can provide early warning capability against chemical or biological events, the Army said.

The National Weather Service ([news - web sites](#)) and Federal Aviation Administration ([news - web sites](#)) radars will be evaluated, as well as commercial C-Band radars. The commercial radars being evaluated are Advanced Design Corp. (ADC), Baron Services and Enterprise Electronics Corp. (EEC).

These tests will help determine the capability of the Weather Service Radar (WSR)-88D system to detect distances to release points, track dissemination patterns, and collect and analyze data.

Information about the test, including schedules and maps, are available on the Internet, he said.

A map of the specific test sites can be found here.

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ibsys/20030318/lo_koco/1534644

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Iraqis May Use Chemical Weapons in Combat

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filed at 10:50 p.m. ET

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Intelligence reports indicate a high risk that Iraq would use chemical weapons during a U.S.-led war to topple President Saddam Hussein, Pentagon officials said Tuesday.

The reports indicate Saddam has given field-level commanders the authority to use chemical weapons on their own initiative, without further directives from the Baghdad, Pentagon officials said.

"We continue to receive reports supporting the assertion that there is a high risk the Iraqi regime would use chemical weapons at some point during any conflict," Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Tuesday. It was the first explicit statement from the Defense Department discussing the chemical weapons risk.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix said he does not believe Saddam's government will use chemical or biological weapons even as a last resort because it would turn world opinion in favor of the United States.

"Some people care about their reputation even after death," he said.

President Bush and other U.S. officials say Iraq has stocks of chemical weapons, including the deadly nerve agents sarin, cyclosarin and VX and a mustard agent like that used in World War I. Saddam has repeatedly denied having chemical or biological weapons, the use of which has been outlawed for decades, although Iraq has acknowledged developing both before the 1991 Persian Gulf War and used them several times in the 1980s.

U.S. officials say they believe Iraq's chemical weapons are under the control of the Republican Guard, Saddam's best trained and most loyal troops. A large part of those forces is concentrated in and around Baghdad, where U.S. officials worry that fighting involving chemical weapons could kill many Iraqi civilians.

Most of Iraq's chemical arsenal, officials say, is loaded onto artillery and rockets that have a range of about a dozen miles or less.

Pentagon officials who discussed the chemical weapons issue on condition of anonymity said it was unclear what rank of Iraqi officers had been authorized to order the use of chemical weapons. Officials said it was doubtful the chemical authority went as low as company-level commanders, who are usually at captain's rank.

Coalition troops awaiting invasion orders have chemical protection gear and equipment that can detect clouds of chemical agents up to three miles away. American tanks and armored vehicles have filters designed to keep the

troops inside safe from the deadly agents. Anticipating the possibility of chemical combat, U.S. troops have trained extensively on operating in a contaminated environment.

All of Iraq's chemical agents except sarin can linger in an area for hours or days. VX, the deadliest chemical weapon known, is a sticky liquid that is particularly long lasting and difficult to decontaminate.

U.S. officials have said they believe Iraq is most likely to use chemical weapons to cover a retreat or put down an internal uprising. Because U.S. forces are so well protected, chemical weapons could be used in an attempt to slow an American onslaught or keep the U.S. forces out of a particular area, rather than to kill large numbers of U.S. troops, officials say.

A chemical attack against Iraqi civilians also could bog down U.S. troops by creating a humanitarian crisis the American forces couldn't ignore.

In his war ultimatum given Monday night, President Bush explicitly warned Iraqi troops against using chemical or biological weapons, especially against Iraqi civilians. U.S. military leaflets, radio broadcasts and e-mails have carried similar warnings that any officers involved in chemical weapons use would be prosecuted on war crimes charges.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-US-Iraq-Chemical-Weapons.html>

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Fearing an Iraqi Attack, Israelis Buy Tape and Masks

By GREG MYRE

ERUSALEM, March 18 — Israel stepped up war preparations today, with the military calling on citizens to set up hermetically sealed "safe rooms" at home in case Iraq fires a missile loaded with chemical weapons.

Hardware stores were flooded with Israelis stocking up on duct tape, plastic sheeting and flashlights, while the army's Home Front Command rolled out television broadcasts on how to use gas masks and make the safe rooms airtight.

The government's highly specific instructions say the safe room should be readied with plastic sheeting and duct tape covering windows and doors. Each person should have a liter of water, canned foods and important documents like passports.

At Jerusalem's largest shopping mall, Israelis queued in long lines in an underground parking lot to receive gas masks that have been on offer for months. Most said they had procrastinated because they did not think Iraq would target Jerusalem, with its large Palestinian population and Islamic holy sites.

The Israeli government has sought to reassure citizens, saying the probability of an Iraqi missile strike is low, even if it cannot be ruled out. "There are no missiles in western Iraq that threaten the state of Israel, and so our assessment is that the danger is very, very small," Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said in an Internet question-and-answer session with the daily Maariv.

Israel believes that even if Iraq fires Scuds, the army's Arrow anti-missile defense will be able to shoot them down. One Arrow battery has been placed south of Tel Aviv, at an air force base, while a second has been set up to guard the northern coastal cities.

Still, Israeli authorities have been drilling the entire public, including small children, to prepare them for any eventuality.

In schools, teachers seek to ease anxieties with practice drills that herd small children into the "popcorn room," a sealed room that has been made child-friendly with snacks and videos.

On Israeli television, children's programs feature puppets wearing gas masks. For adults, news programs answer queries such as whether it is safe to breast feed when the gas masks are supposed to be on. The answer is no, because the baby would not be protected.

Schools and businesses are operating as usual, while hardware stores were staying open around the clock in the Tel Aviv area. The government has set prices for emergency equipment, and established a hotline for consumers who suspect price gouging.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/19/international/middleeast/19ISRA.html>

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Considering a Gas Mask? Be Sure It's a Good Fit

Devices Offer Differing Levels of Protection

By John F. Kelly

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, March 16, 2003; Page A25

I am living proof that gas masks work. I strapped one on recently in the third-floor conference room of Geomet, a Germantown-based "health and personal safety" company. And then I chopped up a raw onion with a paring knife. In the face of the bulb's chemical onslaught, I didn't shed a single tear. Nor did I detect a whiff of the onion's distinctive tang. If terrorists attack with diced onions, a gas mask will protect you.

Of course, VO -- Vidalia onion -- isn't what people are worried about these days. VX is. And GB, HD and other frightening combinations of the alphabet. Because of that fear, some consumers are curious about gas masks, or what are more broadly known as respirators.

The federal government does not endorse the idea of civilians donning gas masks. The answer to the very first question on the www.ready.gov Web site's FAQ section states: "The use of gas masks and hoods by the public during a chemical threat is not recommended due to legitimate safety concerns."

Those safety concerns are not trivial. Use a gas mask incorrectly and you can be killed by your own fumbblings long before al Qaeda has a chance to get you.

This is not to say that the Department of Homeland Security is totally anti-mask. The Web site does mention that "filter masks" can help keep out germs from a biological attack or debris from an explosion, and it says that "something over your nose and mouth in an emergency is better than nothing."

The Filter Mask

That "something" starts with cheap, disposable filter masks found at hardware and paint supply stores. These respirators are rated by the size of particle they protect against and the durability of the filter material. A mask rated 95 means it will stop 95 percent of particles that are 0.3 microns in diameter or larger. The other particle size ratings are 99 (filters out 99 percent of the 0.3-micron particles) and 100 (filters out 99.97 percent, an efficiency comparable to a HEPA filter).

The most common mask is an N95. The N means that the material it is made of is not oil-resistant. A P rating means it is oilproof; an R rating means it is oilproof but can be used a maximum of eight hours.

The anthrax spores in the letter mailed to then-Senate Majority Leader Thomas A. Daschle (D-S.D.) were 1.5 to 3 microns in diameter, so an N95 can safeguard against the disease. (Smallpox, on the other hand, is smaller than 0.3 microns.) In his book "When Every Moment Counts," Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-Tenn.) recommends that N95 masks be included in every disaster supply kit. They start at about \$1.

If you decide to get an N95 mask, be sure it has a moldable metal noseband and crimp it when you use the mask. It will help create a better seal.

Some masks have plastic valves to release your expelled breath so the respirator doesn't get too hot and your glasses don't fog.

Some N95 masks are called "harmful dust respirators." Stay away from what are called "comfort" respirators, masks designed to wear while you're raking leaves or sweeping the floor. (A crude rule of thumb: A mask that is held on by a single elastic strap is less likely to be an N95 than one that has two straps.)

And if you're stuck without a mask, you can follow the advice on Ready.gov and breathe through fabric, such as a folded-up cotton T-shirt or diaper.

Half Masks

Next up in price are what are known as elastomeric respirators. These are typically half masks that cover the nose and mouth and can be fitted with different filters. A P100 or HEPA filter strains out particles, including the sort of radiological particles scattered by a "dirty" bomb. Various types of charcoal filters can neutralize small amounts of certain industrial chemicals, such as ammonia and pesticides.

Prices start at about \$10. They won't stop the nastier nerve gases, but if you're several miles from an overturned chlorine tanker and a cloud is coming your way, they do afford some protection. Since the mask doesn't cover the eyes or rest of the skin, you can still get a dose of chemicals that way, but they do protect the lungs, the primary route of attack with gas.

Manufacturers of N95 masks and half masks are quick to point out that their products were not designed with chemical, biological or radiological attacks in mind.

Masks, Escape Hoods

Most gas-mask manufacturers and retailers agree with Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge that gas masks don't belong in the hands of the public. Experts say they are too difficult for civilians to fit and use properly. Most can't be worn with glasses or by men with beards.

The alternative is the escape hood -- basically a plastic bag with a rubber neck dam and a particle/chemical filter. Unlike a gas mask, which requires that straps be carefully adjusted so there's a leakproof seal between face and mask, an escape hood pretty much seals automatically around the user's neck after it's pulled on. ILC Dover, the company that makes spacesuits for NASA, has introduced a civilian escape hood. Called the SCape, it's packed in a container about as long and a little wider than a box of tissues. It costs \$199. The SCape is what's called a "positive pressure" unit. A tiny motor is activated when the hood is pulled from its box. The motor sucks air through a set of filters and into the hood. Other civilian models include the Gas Mask Hood by Mine Safety Appliances, one of the leading respirator manufacturers, and Survivair's Quick2000, the type purchased for federal workers on Capitol Hill. They're each about \$180. Both of these hoods require wearers to draw in the air themselves through the filter -- fine for normal people but a potential hardship for those with respiratory problems. Hoods can be used only once. These devices join products that have been marketed to frequent travelers in recent years: smoke hoods. Smoke hoods are specifically designed to protect against deadly carbon monoxide during a fire. They don't protect against nerve gas. No mask or hood lasts forever. Its filter will eventually get clogged.

Children

Respirator companies don't make products in sizes that will fit children. You may be able to find N95 respirators sized for smaller adults. The challenge will be fitting it to a child's face to keep out contaminated air. Some escape-hood manufacturers make products just for children. ILC Dover says its Baby SCape hood fits children ages 3 and younger. Safer America, a New York store, sells several hoods and suits for children, toddlers and babies, at \$295 to \$500. With their smaller lungs, children may have trouble pulling air in through a filter. Most children's hoods or masks are supplied air, meaning a motor blows air into the unit. ILC Dover also makes a clear plastic, air-filtering container into which owners can insert a dog or cat in a kennel. The Pet Shield is \$350 for animals up to 50 pounds, \$450 for those 50 to 100 pounds. Where to get them: Locally, Geomet Technologies Inc. distributes a wide range of gas masks and escape hoods: www.geomet.com or 301-428-9898. Safer America is at www.saferamerica.com or 877-774-4055. MSA sells its Gas Mask Hood through amazon.com; information is at www.msasafetyworks.com, or call 888-672-4692. ILC Dover sells through its Web site: www.ilcdover.com, or call 800-631-9567. The Quick2000 is available through Survivair: www.survivair.com, or call 888-274-8535. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A23251-2003Mar13.html>

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