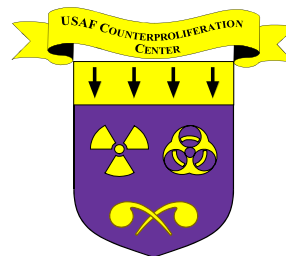


#256

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USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER

CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL



Air University

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Welcome to the CPC Outreach Journal. As part of USAF Counterproliferation Center's mission to counter weapons of mass destruction through education and research, we're providing our government and civilian community a source for timely counterproliferation information. This information includes articles, papers and other documents addressing issues pertinent to US military response options for dealing with nuclear, biological and chemical threats and attacks. It's our hope this information resource will help enhance your counterproliferation issue awareness.

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Posted 4/22/2003 8:34 PM

Updated 4/22/2003 8:36 PM

Second round of smallpox vaccinations begins

By Anita Manning, USA TODAY

Federal health officials, undaunted by a weak response to the first phase of the smallpox preparedness program, are pressing forward with phase two—vaccinating up to 10 million emergency "first responders"—and expanding the program significantly by asking states to prepare not just for bioterrorism, but for all forms of terrorism, including chemical, radiological and conventional weapons.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is issuing guidelines as soon as today to urge state health departments and hospitals to widen their medical detection and response activities to include chemical and nuclear events and to set up labs capable of handling and analyzing chemicals that might be used by terrorists.

The goal is "to enhance the capacity to respond to public health threats posed by terrorist events," said Michael Sage, deputy director of the Office of Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, part of HHS. But, he warned, "it "won't happen overnight. We're just at the beginning of the preparedness efforts from a national level."

States began in January to offer smallpox vaccination to doctors, nurses and other medical workers who would form teams to care for the first victims in the event of a smallpox attack by terrorists. Initially, public health officials thought as many as half a million people would volunteer, but medical workers balked, citing the lack of liability and compensation if they or their family members were sickened by the vaccine. Congress recently passed legislation to address that issue, but as of April 11, only 32,644 people had been immunized.

The second phase of the program, aimed at offering vaccines to as many as 10 million emergency workers, police, firefighters and others, may be met with a similar lack of enthusiasm.

"Based on what we've seen from the health care community, at this point you would expect a tepid response from the first responders," said Jonathan Fielding, Director of Public Health for Los Angeles County. "We are prepared to proceed with the program, but haven't had a lot of inquiries from people asking us to get this done as soon as possible."

Reasons vary, he said, but include "the feeling on some people's part that the likelihood (of an attack) is very low, even more now, with the end of (the war in) Iraq."

The International Association of Fire Fighters, the union of firefighters and emergency workers, has urged its membership to "take a wait and see attitude," to assure that union protocols are in place and compensation issues are clarified, said spokesman George Burke. He said New York health officials tried offering vaccine to firefighters there, but "our local union put the kibosh on it."

http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2003-04-22-smallpox-usat_x.htm

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Washington Times

April 23, 2003

Pg. 1

U.S. Says Allies Will Hunt Arms

Brushes aside demands for U.N. inspections

By Joseph Curl, The Washington Times

The White House said yesterday that the U.S.-led coalition — not the United Nations — would handle the hunt for Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, and the world body's chief weapons inspector accused Washington and London of pushing for war on "shaky" intelligence.

With the war in Iraq quickly winding down, several of the nations that opposed the military campaign to oust Saddam Hussein insisted that the United Nations have exclusive authority over the search for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

The Bush administration, however, said the matter is not open to debate, setting the stage for a new confrontation between Washington and U.N. Security Council members Russia, Germany and France.

"Make no mistake about it: The United States and the coalition have taken on the responsibility for dismantling Iraq's [weapons of mass destruction]," White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said.

"We have a coalition that is working on the ground to dismantle Iraq's WMD programs, and we think that's going to be effective. We think it will get the job done," the spokesman said.

The White House yesterday also contradicted France and Russia by denying a linkage between lifting economic sanctions and any official declaration that Iraq was free of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

"Why should any nation support imposing sanctions on the Iraqi people now?" Mr. Fleischer asked. "Sanctions equal Saddam Hussein. Saddam Hussein is gone. It is wrong now to leave sanctions on the people of Iraq. They don't deserve it."

Long before the U.S.-led campaign, Russia and France had demanded an end to sanctions allowing Saddam's regime to sell oil only to buy food and medicine through a U.N. program.

The program had been providing food for 60 percent of Iraq's 24 million people.

Now that President Bush has urged the U.N. Security Council to lift the sanctions, imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Russia and France insist that inspectors first deem Iraq free of weapons of mass destruction. Paris, however, said yesterday that it would support the temporary suspension of sanctions, but not their full removal.

France's U.N. ambassador, Jean-Marc de La Sabliere, said the Security Council "must take into account the new realities on the ground."

But Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of Russia, which holds a veto at the Security Council, said his country is "not at all opposed to the lifting of sanctions" but continues to insist that U.N. inspectors certify that Iraq is rid of all weapons of mass destruction.

Meanwhile, chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix told the British Broadcasting Corp. yesterday that he suspected that the United States and Britain, which provided the forces to remove Saddam, exaggerated assertions that the Iraqi dictator had amassed weapons of mass destruction.

"I think it's been one of the disturbing elements that so much of the intelligence on which the capitals built their case seemed to have been shaky," Mr. Blix said.

He questioned intelligence used by Washington and London to justify an invasion, including "the alleged contract between Iraq and Niger about the import of some 500 tons" of uranium.

"When the [International Atomic Energy Agency] got the contract, they had no great difficulty in finding out that this was a fake, falsified simply," Mr. Blix said. "I think that is very, very disturbing. Who falsifies this? And is it not disturbing that the intelligence agencies that should have all the technical means at their disposal did not discover that this was falsified?"

The Bush administration said Mr. Blix appeared to be stalling for time to extend U.N. inspections and avoid war. Some critics outside the administration said the chief inspector's team deliberately suppressed information in its prewar report on banned Iraqi weapons, including an unmanned drone plane and a cluster bomb.

Mr. Blix said yesterday the criticism was intended to discredit inspections.

"At that time, the U.S. was very eager to sway the votes of the Security Council, and they felt that stories about these things would be useful to have and they let it out. Thereby, they tried to hurt us a bit and say we'd suppressed this," he said.

Asked whether the United States had leaked information to sway U.N. votes, he said, "It looked like that."

Mr. Blix yesterday addressed the U.N. Security Council in closed session on his readiness to field an inspection team, but a spokesman for U.S. Ambassador John D. Negroponte said the argument was pointless.

"We see no immediate role for Dr. Blix and his inspection teams," Richard Grenell said.

Mr. Negroponte said after the closed-door meeting, "For the time being and for the foreseeable future, we see that as a coalition activity."

The White House yesterday dismissed doubts that such weapons would be found, despite reports that an Iraqi scientist had told a U.S. military team that Iraq had destroyed chemical arms and biological warfare equipment days before the war began.

"There's no question we remain confident that the WMD will be found," Mr. Fleischer said. "One of the things that we all knew, and Hans Blix knew it, is what masters of deception the Iraqis are and how many years they had to perfect their deceptions."

The spokesman also hit back at Mr. Blix for his comments to the BBC.

"I think it's unfortunate if Hans Blix would in any way criticize the United States at this juncture. The United States is working with Iraqis to build a new country for them. And I think that would just be unfortunate if his position today is to criticize the United States," he said.

In other postwar diplomacy, senior administration officials met Monday to discuss ways to punish France for its opposition to the Iraq war. A senior official said options include sidelining Paris at NATO, limiting French participation in trans-Atlantic forums and excluding France from policy meetings between the White House and its European allies.

The official said Vice President Dick Cheney strongly advocates punitive action against France.

National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice's deputy, Stephen Hadley, led the meeting with Marc Grossman, undersecretary of state for political affairs, representing Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Last night, in an interview on PBS' "Charlie Rose Show," Mr. Powell said France would suffer for having vowed to veto any Security Council resolution authorizing an Iraq war.

"It's over and we have to take a look at the relationship. We have to look at all aspects of our relationship with France in light of this," said Mr. Powell, according to a State Department transcript of the interview.

Asked whether there would be concrete actions against France, Mr. Powell said "yes" but gave no details.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030423-487306.htm>

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New York Times

April 23, 2003

Focus Shifts From Weapons To The People Behind Them

By Judith Miller

SOUTH OF BAGHDAD, Iraq, April 22 — Information supplied by an Iraqi scientist that Iraq destroyed chemical weapons and biological-warfare equipment before the war has shifted the focus from finding such weapons to locating key people who worked on the programs, experts and military officers said.

The effort to find the building blocks of a program for unconventional weapons and "dual use" equipment with military and peaceful applications has also taken on new urgency, experts said.

"The paradigm has shifted," said a member of the Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha, an American military team hunting for unconventional weapons in Iraq. "We've had a conceptual jump in how we think about, and what we look for in Iraq's program. We must look at the infrastructure, not just for the weapons."

The team member spoke to this reporter, who was accompanying the group.

Based on what the Iraqi scientist had said about weapons being destroyed or stocks being hidden, military experts said they now believed they might not find large caches of illicit chemicals or biological agents, at least not in Iraq. They said this would increase their reliance on documents and testimony from individual Iraqis to help them piece together the scope, organization, and goals of the programs that the United States has said Saddam Hussein created and concealed from the world.

American officials said they had surveyed more than half of the 150 sites that American intelligence organizations once considered the most likely places to hide unconventional arms and that they had found no stockpiles of chemical or germ agents.

Members of the search team have now joined other allied military forces in scouring Baghdad for scientists and military officers who worked in such programs, experts said. They are also re-examining lists of "dual use" equipment found at previously examined sites.

A second change in the operation involves how the teams are conducting searches. In theory, the 75th Exploitation Task Force, a mixture of military units from several Pentagon agencies and led by the commander of the 75th Field Artillery Brigade from Fort Sill, Okla., was supposed to deploy teams from task force headquarters.

But Col. Richard R. McPhee, the commander, cannot move the force close to Baghdad because of concerns about protecting its sensitive equipment. So he has permitted the teams to push forward on their own to get to what the military terms "time-sensitive targets."

Two of the four mobile teams originally assigned to search for unconventional weapons have since been reassigned to investigate war crimes or sites unrelated to weapons.

That leaves only two teams to investigate suspected weapons sites and tips. However, the number of other units involved in the weapons search has been expanded from four to seven, officials said.

On Sunday night, weapons experts from the Alpha team met with Ahmad Chalabi, an Iraqi opposition leader who has returned to Iraq — with Pentagon backing — after 45 years in exile, to explore the possibility of exchanging information.

Military planners and weapons experts say their experience with the Iraqi informant has underscored the need to respond quickly.

"The truth is not perishable," said Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, which is now supporting the team's weapons hunt. "But timeliness is important."

As troops from the division moved through a small town in southern Iraq nearly two weeks ago, the Iraqi scientist slipped a note in Arabic to an ambulance driver in a military convoy. The driver passed the note to his unit's chemical officer, but its significance was almost overlooked.

Written under a pseudonym, the note said its author had proof that information was kept from international weapons inspectors. Beside stating that Iraqi officials had destroyed chemical weapons and equipment just before the war, and that they had tested biological agents on animals, the note asked for a meeting with a "qualified" scientist. It also asked for appropriate security provisions and for immunity from prosecution for the Iraqi informant.

Although the unit sent an officer and a translator to contact the Iraqi, the note — and a report on the meeting — never made it to the group charged with vetting such tips.

The members of the Alpha mobile exploitation team did not learn of the existence of the informant until six days later, and said they feared he might have fled, having heard nothing from the Americans.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/23/international/worldspecial/23WEAP.html>

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Dallas Morning News

April 23, 2003

U.S. Under The Gun To Find Iraqi Arms

White House confident, but critics call results so far 'conspicuous'

By David Jackson and Richard Whittle, The Dallas Morning News

WASHINGTON – Now the United States – not the United Nations – is conducting weapons inspections in Iraq, and feeling the heat for coming up empty.

"It is conspicuous that so far they have not stumbled upon anything, [any] evidence," Hans Blix, chief U.N. weapons inspector, said Tuesday.

In questioning intelligence information that President Bush and aides used to justify war in Iraq, Dr. Blix joined a growing chorus of international critics that includes Russian President Vladimir Putin. "The goal of this war – to disarm Iraq – has not been achieved," Mr. Putin said.

Bush officials said the information they used to justify the war came not only from spies and surveillance but from a decade's worth of U.N. reports on chemical and biological weapons.

"We know they exist. And we're confident they will be found," White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said.

Officials said that U.S. forces have doubled their efforts to find illicit weapons in a country where members of Saddam Hussein's regime made an art of hiding them.

"They have learned to function in an inspection environment," Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said. "So that meant they had to have things deeply buried, well-dispersed, well-hidden, with a relatively few number of people who knew where things are."

Mr. Rumsfeld is aware of the political pressure to produce hard evidence, given the specific allegations that he, Mr. Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell made before the war. "There is, understandably, an appetite to know the answers to these things," he said.

In presenting the administration's case to the U.N. Security Council on Feb. 5, Mr. Powell recounted evidence from spies, satellite photos and communications intercepts of Iraqi efforts to hide weapons from inspectors.

He said that while Iraq declared 2,245 gallons of anthrax, the United Nations estimated that Mr. Hussein could have produced 6,600 gallons. He also cited estimates that Iraq had a stockpile of 100 to 500 tons of chemical weapons agents.

Administration officials said those numbers represented differences between the amount of weapons Iraq owned up to and U.N. reports of Iraq's total production. Mr. Powell never declared that U.S. officials knew where illicit weapons or the materials to make them were being kept.

Before that, in his State of the Union speech on Jan. 28, Mr. Bush offered these numbers:

"Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein had the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard, and VX nerve agent," he said.

"U.S. intelligence indicates that Saddam Hussein had upwards of 30,000 munitions capable of delivering chemical agents," he later added.

Analysts said many U.N. and intelligence reports included ranges of estimates, and the Bush administration tended to use the higher-end numbers. Now they are in something of a spot, analysts said, and failure to make a case could have all sorts of ramifications.

"It would really be a crisis of credibility for the president and for the administration and for all of us who were for the war," said William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, a conservative magazine. "It would have major implications – but I don't expect it to happen."

While officials said they were confident that much would be found, they are also investigating reports that Iraq might have destroyed chemical and biological arms programs right before the war.

David Franz, a former biological weapons inspector for the United Nations, said that even if Iraq destroyed all chemical weapons, inspectors would probably detect traces of them. Biological weapons are easier to dispose of, he said, because they can be developed in small spaces and in small amounts.

"I'm almost certain we'll find chemical weapons," said Mr. Franz, vice president with the Southern Research Institute in Birmingham, Ala. "I'm still not sure we'll find biological weapons – it would be very easy to cover that up, unless we find somebody who says, 'I did it.' "

International pressure on the United States to find something is growing. *The Independent*, a British newspaper, recently taunted Prime Minister Tony Blair, Mr. Bush's top international ally, with a simple question: "So where are they, Mr. Blair?"

Dr. Blix noted that another American-British accusation, that Mr. Hussein had revived its nuclear development program, was undercut by forged documents.

"That there were [intelligence] shortcomings is clear," Dr. Blix said. "And that refers not only to the intelligence from the U.S. side, but from around the world."

Dr. Blix is pushing for the return of U.N. weapons inspectors to Iraq, which could produce yet another dispute between the United States and the United Nations.

Mr. Fleischer said Tuesday that the United States wants to move forward with its own inspection plans. "We have high confidence in the ability of the people who are there now to do the job," he said.

'We'll find people'

Mr. Rumsfeld said it was too early to reasonably expect U.S. or other investigators to uncover materials that the Hussein regime went to great lengths to hide. He said discovery would probably depend on statements from Iraqi scientists and documents left behind. "What's going to happen, ultimately, is we'll find people. And the people will decide that they want to look forward instead of back, and they will come to us, as they are [doing], and offer up suggestions as to where one might look and how one might approach it," Mr. Rumsfeld said.

Since U.S. forces took Baghdad two weeks ago, several top Iraqi officials who might know about weapons programs have either surrendered or been captured.

Former officials in custody include Mr. Hussein's top science adviser, Lt. Gen. Amer al-Saadi, and Dr. Rihab Taha, who ran Iraq's biological warfare program – nicknamed "Dr. Germ" by U.N. weapons inspectors. Gen. al-Saadi publicly denied that Iraq had any weapons of mass destruction, however.

But Mr. Rumsfeld said it was "premature" to conclude that none of those in custody were offering information that could uncover illicit weapons.

"We've got a good group of people ... working out there, and they're collecting things, they're looking for things, they're interrogating people," Mr. Rumsfeld said, referring to an interagency group including the CIA, the FBI, the Department of Defense and its Defense Intelligence Agency. "They're finding all kinds of information."

Teams in the field

The administration isn't counting solely on former Iraqi officials for information. Already at work in Iraq to search a list of more than 100 suspected sites are four military "mobile exploitation teams" – about 200 experts using mobile labs with detection equipment including mass spectrometers, gas chromatographs and isotopic neutron spectrometers.

The Pentagon is training another 1,000 intelligence analysts, scientists and linguists for a survey group that will be sent in the next few weeks to expand the search for weapons and the materials to make them, said a defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The group, which includes more than 30 former U.N. weapons inspectors, will establish headquarters in Baghdad and field offices in northern and southern Iraq, the official said.

"The ISG [Iraq survey group] is going to go there, and it's going to look for as long as it takes, because we know it's there," he added. "This is a regime that's been hiding this stuff for 12 years."

The survey group will be authorized to "spend what it needs" to get the job done, the official said, noting that, "The United States has got a lot riding on the line here."

Still, he said, "There are those who will not believe, no matter what we do. They're going to say the U.S. planted the stuff."

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dallas/nation/stories/042303dnnatwmd.29eef.html>

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New York Times
April 23, 2003

U.S. Envoys Arrive In China For Talks With North Korea

By Joseph Kahn

BEIJING, April 22 — American envoys arrived here today for talks with North Korea on its nuclear weapons program, breaking a six-month diplomatic impasse and at least temporarily easing fears of a military confrontation between the Korean War enemies.

James A. Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Asia and Pacific affairs, was leading the United States delegation at the trilateral talks, which include China. The meeting, scheduled to get under way on Wednesday morning and continue through Friday, will be the first direct negotiations since October, when North Korea acknowledged that it had begun to enrich uranium in contravention of a 1994 pact to end its nuclear weapons program.

The face-to-face meeting, which will be held out of the media spotlight, has raised hopes in the region that a peaceful solution to the crisis is possible after months of belligerent posturing on both sides.

North Korea is viewed as highly reluctant to accede to American demands to give up its nuclear program, which it has used as a bargaining chip to extract vital economic and food aid from the West and to help preserve the power of its insular government.

To underscore the point, North Korea engaged in brinkmanship on the eve of the talks. The government said in the English translation of a statement issued over the weekend that it had already started to reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods.

Though North Korea subsequently retracted the statement, the government made clear that it could at any time take that crucial step toward producing plutonium for nuclear bombs.

It is also unclear how committed the Bush administration is to reaching a deal. Senior officials in the Pentagon and Vice President Dick Cheney's office have warned against allowing North Korea to blackmail the United States into offering aid or other benefits in exchange for an agreement not to develop nuclear weapons. They warned that the North Koreans could violate a new agreement just as they did the 1994 agreement negotiated by the Clinton administration.

China is a traditional ally of North Korea and its economic lifeline to the outside world, but it has also backed the American position that the Korean peninsula should remain nuclear free.

President Bush said on Sunday that he expected China to help exert pressure on North Korea.

"China is assuming a very important responsibility," Mr. Bush said of the country's willingness to take part in the negotiations.

Officials in Beijing say that China will play more of a mediating role and that the United States and North Korea will have to work out an agreement on their own.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry, confirming today for the first time that the talks would take place, said it expected modest results.

The dialogue, the ministry said, is intended to allow the United States and North Korea to understand each other's position more clearly.

"We hope that the talks will be conducive to relevant parties for having a better knowledge and to relieve the tensions," said Liu Jianchao, the Foreign Ministry spokesman.

Before the discussions got under way, a leading North Korean military official made diplomatic rounds in Beijing. Vice Marshal Jo Myong Rok, who is expected to represent North Korea in the talks, met Hu Jintao and top Chinese military officials to discuss "international and regional issues," Chinese state news media reported.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/23/international/asia/23KORE.html>

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Los Angeles Times
April 23, 2003

After 'Decline,' U.S. Again Capable Of Making Nuclear Arms

Energy Department is restarting production of plutonium parts for its stockpile of bombs.

By Ralph Vartabedian, Times Staff Writer

The United States has regained the capability to make nuclear weapons for the first time in 14 years and has restarted production of plutonium parts for bombs, the Energy Department said Tuesday.

The announcement marks an important symbolic and operational milestone in rebuilding the nation's nuclear weapons complex, which began a long retrenchment in the late 1980s as the Cold War ended and the toll of environmental damage from bomb production became known.

"Since 1989 until today, we were the only nuclear power in the world that could not make a pit," said Linton Brooks, administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, the Energy Department agency that runs the weapons production complex.

A pit is a hollow sphere made of plutonium, surrounded by conventional explosives that detonate and start fission as the sphere implodes.

Under a Bush administration plan, the Energy Department is beginning limited production of plutonium parts for the stockpile of nuclear weapons and will begin laying plans for a new factory that could produce components for hundreds of weapons each year.

The last time the United States made a plutonium pit was at the Energy Department's Rocky Flats site in Colorado, which was shut down after serious environmental laws were broken and the FBI raided the plant.

Weapons scientists at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico said Tuesday that they had built a plutonium pit for a W-88 warhead for a Trident nuclear missile.

The production took eight years and ultimately will cost \$1.5 billion when the pit is fully certified by the Energy Department in 2007, Los Alamos officials said.

"It is a sign that after a long period of decline, the weapons complex is back and growing," said Jon Wolfsthal, deputy director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and a former Energy Department weapons expert. "To the average U.S. citizen, it would be accurate to say we have restarted the production of nuclear weapons."

Energy Department officials vehemently denied that they are actually producing nuclear weapons and said they need the capability of producing plutonium parts to ensure the reliability of the stockpile of U.S. weapons, which is aging and may need new components.

Although the United States built its first nuclear bomb in a matter of a few years during World War II, the effort to restart component production is going to take about two decades.

The Energy Department expects the future pit factory to begin production in 2018, after lengthy design and environmental reviews.

But critics question whether the Bush administration is going overboard in its investments in the nuclear weapons complex. Thomas Cochran, a scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said the government is now spending about \$6 billion annually on the nuclear weapons complex, 50% more than it did during the Cold War.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-bomb23apr23.1.7004581.story?coll=la%2Dheadlines%2Dnation>

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Baltimore Sun

April 23, 2003

Work To Begin Today On Eradication At APG

Mustard agent destruction was accelerated after 9/11

By A Sun Staff Writer

Destruction of the bulk mustard agent stockpile at Aberdeen Proving Ground will start today under an accelerated program begun by the Army after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It will take about six months of around-the-clock work to complete the process.

Destruction had been scheduled for completion by 2006, but security concerns after the terrorist attacks led to "Speedy Neut," a project that speeded the original neutralization process.

The Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility will destroy the mustard agent first. Later, after all of the agent has been removed, the empty steel containers will be decontaminated and cut in two for recycling off-site.

"Given the terrorists threat facing our nation, these toxins must be destroyed as soon as possible," U.S. Sen. Barbara A. Mikulski, a Democrat, said in a statement released yesterday.

Mustard agent, a syrupy blister compound with the consistency of molasses, has been stored and monitored for more than 60 years at the Chemical Agent Storage Yard in the Edgewood Area of APG.

Bechtel Aberdeen, the contractor responsible for the project, heads a team of more than 400 people to destroy the aging mustard stockpile. Members of the Army Technical Escort Unit, an organization with 60 years' experience in the movement of hazardous chemicals, will move the large steel containers of mustard agent to the neutralization facility.

The Army worked with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Maryland Department of the Environment, which approved the plans for the neutralization facility. After a gradual start of the process, the facility is expected to drain and neutralize an average of 12 containers a day.

Lee Smith, Bechtel Aberdeen project manager, said the plant has been operating on a 24-hour-a-day training schedule since early December.

<http://www.sunspot.net/news/local/bal-md.aberdeen23apr23.story>

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Newsweek (Web exclusive)

April 22, 2003

Dealing With The Nuclear North

In the days before talks begin with North Korea, the debate within the administration over how best to deal with Kim Jong Il has grown—and so have the divisions

By Richard Wolffe

To the outside world, the eternal struggle over American foreign policy may seem perplexing. But for those at the heart of it all, every punctuation mark in every policy paper represents part of a much bigger challenge: how to exert American power in the world. Even the smallest battles are fought as if the entire direction of U.S. policy depended on their outcome.

Take North Korea. You might be forgiven for thinking that it would be relatively easy to find agreement within President George Bush's administration on how to deal with the weird world of Kim Jong Il, one of the planet's last Stalinist leaders. After all, the administration managed to hold itself together in the buildup to war in Iraq—a conflict that most of the rest of the world found unpalatable.

But the policy debate over how to deal with the communist North is once again tearing apart the administration's foreign policy team. Often, in journalistic shorthand, it gets boiled down to a simple formula: hawks versus doves, Defense Department versus State Department. But, in fact, the divisions are far more complex, splitting departments along ideological lines. It might be more accurately described as a battle between hardliners versus compromisers. As U.S. officials prepare to negotiate directly with North Korea this week, at a series of talks hosted by the Chinese government in Beijing that begin Wednesday, administration officials say the infighting between these two groups is more intense than in any other diplomatic battle.

In North Korea's case, the hardliners are pushing hard for a mini-Cold War against Pyongyang. That means a Reaganesque approach to nuclear arms talks (rather than what they see as the Carteresque position of the Clinton years). It means pressure on Kim's few supporters to tighten the screws, including leaning on China and Russia to use their economic leverage to de-nuke the North. And it might even take the form of some form of interdiction or blockade around North Korea—intercepting shipments of missiles and stopping North Korean officials from traveling, for example. The goal: to bring about the rapid collapse of Kim's regime.

That's a prospect that alarms the compromisers enormously. After all, the North is almost certainly in possession of nuclear weapons already, and it has a huge army poised to inflict tremendous casualties on South Korea. It also alarms them because—short of an unthinkable costly war—the compromisers believe the only realistic way to deal with the North is to negotiate another deal. Sure, the North has reneged on all previous deals to end its nuclear programs. But there seems little alternative to a negotiated deal, and that leaves the uncomfortable task of compromising with a loathsome regime.

That ideological divide between hardliners and compromisers has only deepened as the talks with the North move closer. In the run up to this week's discussions in Beijing, there were bitter struggles over some things as seemingly minor as the talking points for U.S. officials. The hardliners wanted to script very tightly what was offered by the administration in Beijing; the compromisers wanted the freedom to negotiate their own position with the mercurial North Koreans. And those are just the talks about the talks: this week's session is designed merely to set the stage for a bigger meeting—with the help of other players such as Japan, South Korea and possibly the European Union—to confront the real problem of dismantling the North's nuclear programs.

So when the North resumed its belligerent tone last week—proclaiming the need for its own deterrent and bragging about reprocessing nuclear fuel rods—the hardliners saw a chance to torpedo the talks they never wanted. The

administration engaged in one more struggle over whether it was worth talking at all, before the State department went ahead and sent an inter-agency team to China on Monday.

More unsettling for the compromisers was the position of China itself. Aides to Secretary of State Colin Powell said that China's role was critical in convincing the rest of the administration to support the very idea of sitting down with the North. They even claimed that China's offer to host the three-way session was a personal triumph for Powell, following his visit to the Chinese capital in February. "Some people were writing that the Chinese stiffed him," said one senior State Department official. "But the Chinese are more helpful now and have been keeping in touch about this with the Secretary."

Yet the North Koreans, who insist on negotiating directly with the United States, made it clear that the Chinese were merely pouring the tea at this week's meetings. And the Chinese ambassador to South Korea appeared to confirm that view. "I don't think China plans to mediate," Ambassador Li Bin told South Korean radio last week. Those comments alarmed even the compromisers at the State department, who were seriously reconsidering the value of talks late last week.

If you believe Newt Gingrich, these failures are largely the fault of the State Department. The former House Speaker and now part-time adviser to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld told the American Enterprise Institute on Tuesday that "America cannot lead the world with a broken instrument of diplomacy." He called for "dramatic change at the State department," saying that Powell's troops were putting "at risk" the administration's foreign policy.

Gingrich was mostly concerned with the Middle East, but North Korea's case reveals a bigger problem. Much of the reason for the administration's internal policy battles is the unclear direction of the president's policy towards Pyongyang. With one hand he gives support to the hardliners by branding North Korea part of the 'Axis of Evil' and elevating the threat of weapons of mass destruction to the top of his global agenda. With the other hand, he gives support to the compromisers by effectively taking the military option off the table.

If that didn't create enough confusion, the White House also insisted it will not negotiate with the North. The suggestion is that the United States will not trade aid for the North's nukes. In practice, however, it is hard to sit down for talks without engaging in some kind of negotiation. If this week's meetings mean anything, they mean that the Bush administration is ready to come to some sort of deal.

Of course it will be tough--and maybe impossible--to convince the North Koreans to give up their nuclear ambitions. But it may prove just as tough to convince the administration's conservatives to give up their Cold War ambitions and accept the concept of compromising with the communists.

<http://www.msnbc.com/news/903887.asp>

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April 23, 2003

Iraqis: We Were Told to Destroy Bacteria

By **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Filed at 7:45 a.m. ET

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) -- Six Iraqi scientists working at different Baghdad research institutions were ordered to destroy some bacteria and equipment and hide more in their homes before visits from U.N. weapons inspectors in the months leading up to the war, the scientists told The Associated Press.

In separate interviews, all of the scientists said they were involved in civilian research projects and none knew of any programs for weapons of mass destruction. It was not clear why their materials, ostensibly for nonmilitary research, were ordered destroyed.

But their accounts indicate the government of Saddam Hussein may have had advance knowledge of at least some of the inspectors' visits, as the United States suspected, and that the former Iraqi regime was deeply concerned about any material that could raise the suspicion of U.N. experts.

"An hour or two before the inspectors came to the university, I got my orders from the chairman," said a biochemistry professor at Saddam University for Science and Engineering.

"The order was to hide anything that might make the inspectors suspicious. Any bacterium, any fungus. I destroyed seven petri dishes in the autoclave and I put the others in the trunk of my car."

An autoclave uses superheated steam, most often to sterilize equipment.

He said the petri dishes held Staphylococcus and E. coli bacteria and a fungus that can cause severe skin problems -- all commonly used for experiments.

The scientist and several others would only speak on condition of anonymity.

While U.S. troops are firmly in control of the Iraqi capital, university officials, some of them linked by blood to Saddam, remain in their academic positions and scientists fear they could be fired if they are discovered providing information that slights their bosses.

Saddam University's assistant dean, Ameer Abbas Ameer, said inspectors visited his university three times, checking the chemistry, biology and physics departments. He denied ordering professors and researchers to destroy or hide materials.

"The inspectors never found anything because there wasn't anything to find," he said. "They were even joking about it when they were here. They were never serious. You don't search for weapons of mass destruction under the carpet."

But the professor and other scientists said orders came from Ameer's office, through the department chairman, to hide and destroy materials when the inspectors were on their way.

"The chairman told us not to answer questions from any inspectors, to go to the cafeteria and stay there until they left," the professor said. "They were afraid. What they were afraid of, I don't know."

President Bush claimed during his State of the Union address that Iraqi spies had penetrated the U.N. inspections. While some inspectors privately suspect as much, none of the inspection teams found any firm evidence to support the president's claim.

"Clearly we were well aware that the Iraqis were trying to figure out our inspection plans and we took many practicable precautions against that," said Ewen Buchanan, spokesman for the U.N. inspectors. He said information was handled on a "need to know" basis and precautions included "silent briefings" between inspectors to elude any listening devices the Iraqis may have placed at U.N. offices in Baghdad.

U.N. inspectors returned to Iraq last November after a four-year hiatus. Over a period of 3 1/2 months, they conducted hundreds of visits to factories, universities and military facilities. Despite the insistence of the Bush administration that Iraq had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, the inspectors found no such evidence before the U.S.-led war on Iraq forced them to leave in mid-March.

So far, U.S. forces haven't found any conclusive evidence that Iraq has weapons it was banned from possessing after the 1991 Gulf War. Officials hope scientists and other Iraqis will feel free to provide information now that the regime is gone. U.S. officials are questioning several top Iraqi officials who were involved in former weapons programs and the Pentagon has offered rewards of up to \$200,000 for information on weapons of mass destruction. None of the scientists interviewed by the AP in their homes and on campuses said they had any such information to provide.

But four graduate students in the biotechnology department at Saddam University said they too received orders from their department head to get rid of bacteria that could be used to produce toxins for biological weapons.

"We destroyed some species of bacteria and were told to hide others," one of the students said. "Some students took their samples to their houses."

At a biotechnology laboratory at the Baghdad University for Science and Engineering, researcher Majid Rasheed said inspectors visited three times, but that his chairman had ordered investigators to destroy and hide materials in November, just as the inspections resumed.

Rasheed said some basic materials were destroyed just to avoid any suspicions that they could be used for military purposes.

"We took home media for culturing bacteria and shaker-incubators used for fermentation," he said. "Now we will bring them back."

Such laboratory equipment, used by scientists to grow bacteria for study, could theoretically be used to create biological agents such as anthrax. But the equipment would be much too small to generate biological weapons in the quantities Iraq has been accused of producing.

Rasheed said none of the materials were being used for weapons development, but that he was unsure whether any were banned by U.N. resolutions adopted at the end of the 1991 Gulf War, which prohibited Iraqi research into weapons of mass destruction.

"Maybe some were banned. I don't know. We just wanted to avoid problems," Rasheed said.

Another professor from Ibn al-Haithem University said he saw a member of the Iraqi intelligence service, who had been sent to pursue a chemistry degree, taking materials out of the university just before the inspections began.

"I don't know what it was," said Alaha al-Qaisi, a chemistry professor.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Niko Price is correspondent at large for The Associated Press. Correspondent Dafna Linzer contributed to this report from the United Nations.

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-Iraq-Scientists.html>

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New test of our terrorism defenses

JASON HAGEY; The News Tribune

A mock "dirty bomb" will "explode" somewhere in Seattle next month, spreading a pretend spray of radioactive debris over part of the Emerald City.

At about the same time, a staged bioterrorism assault will hit the Chicago area, testing the ability of officials there to handle a much different but equally sobering type of attack.

Together, the scenarios are part of a congressionally mandated counterterrorism exercise known as Topoff 2, an acronym for Top Officials.

It's only the second such exercise mounted in the nation and the first since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

It's also the first large-scale counterterrorism exercise since the creation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

"It's the largest counterterrorism event ever held in the nation," said Eric Holdeman, director of the King County Office of Emergency Management. "Or the world, for that matter."

Lessons learned from the first Topoff, held in 2000 in New Hampshire, Colorado and Washington, D.C. - as well as a shift in national sentiment following Sept. 11 - will make this one different in several ways.

Not the least of which is the near-absence of critics charging that it's a waste of money and that nothing like it would ever happen.

The purpose of Topoff, however, hasn't changed.

Unlike other emergency preparedness exercises, which primarily test the ability of law enforcement, firefighters, medical workers and other first responders, Topoff - as its name implies - is aimed squarely at the highest-level decision-makers.

"It's an incredible opportunity," said Glen Woodbury, director of the Washington state Department of Emergency Management.

The weeklong exercise begins May 12 and concludes May 16 with a critique session. The full-scale field exercise will conclude May 13, but emergency planners will continue playing the scenario for two more days.

Everyone from Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels and King County Executive Ron Sims to top-level Cabinet officials in Washington, D.C., will play along, making decisions about which agency should do what and what to tell the public. The media also have been invited to join the role-playing to make it seem as realistic as possible.

In all, several hundred people will participate and virtually every government agency will be represented. The federal government is paying the entire \$2.5 million cost.

Last fall, federal officials announced that Seattle had been chosen as one of the two main sites for Topoff 2, along with greater Chicago.

The Department of Justice, in charge of the exercise at the time, wanted a West Coast city with a major port and proximity to an international border.

Canada is joining in the exercise, adding another layer of complexity missing from the first Topoff.

Pierce County and the City of Kent are planning smaller, unrelated exercises to coincide with the Topoff drill.

The government hired a private contractor, AMTI, to develop the Seattle scenario.

Details of the script won't be revealed in advance, but participants know it involves a so-called dirty bomb, a crude combination of conventional explosives such as TNT packed with radioactive material.

If it's anything like the New Hampshire exercise in 2000, it promises to be incredibly detailed.

When the New Hampshire scenario called for a van to explode near the starting line of a charity road race, officials prepared for it by blowing up a real van at a training ground near Washington, D.C.

They meticulously mapped the debris field and then packed up all the pieces, shipped them to New Hampshire and laid them out exactly as the pieces landed.

The van turned out to contain pretend mustard gas, so in order to identify potential contamination victims the organizers went around spraying garlic scent on actors the morning of the drill.

"Everyone smelled like pizza," said Jim Van Dongen, spokesman for the New Hampshire Department of Safety and Emergency Management.

The exercise generally went well, Van Dongen said, but it also revealed weaknesses, primarily involving communication. Local, regional and state officials sometimes had trouble talking with federal officials, he said.

And there was a crush of people who arrived quickly, overwhelming the Portsmouth fire chief who served as the incident commander.

"He had agencies responding that he didn't know existed," Van Dongen said. That probably wouldn't happen in a real emergency, he added.

It was a dramatically different scene in Denver, where exhausted participants called a halt to their exercise four days after it started.

A covert release of pretend plague at the Denver Performing Arts Center quickly overwhelmed emergency responders, "killing" thousands and spreading around the world.

Reviews of that exercise were less positive.

"I could have told you for a lot less than \$3 million that you can overwhelm a health system," said Greg Moser, then the counterterrorism manager for the State of Colorado.

Still, observers found the exercise worthwhile in some respects. Even Moser, now with the Jefferson County (Colorado) Emergency Management office, said that while it could have been handled better, he believes Topoff was useful. If nothing else, it showed how much work remains to be done.

One criticism of the 2000 Topoff - the lack of notice - won't be a complaint with Topoff 2. It's still a "cold start" exercise, meaning participants won't be waiting around for it to begin, but everyone knows generally when it will start.

As a consequence, emergency workers can schedule overtime and work around real-world emergencies. There also is much more training in advance this time around.

Coordination of many jurisdictions will no doubt be among the greatest challenges, said King County's Holdeman. For example, the county's public health department lacks expertise in radiation, he said, so it will be forced to rely on help from the state, which has training because of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near the Tri-Cities.

Simply talking to each other may prove problematic. A federal study released this month showed that Washington is one of 36 states that has not upgraded communications equipment enough to ensure that various agencies can talk to each other during a crisis.

Whatever lessons are learned, there's a good chance they will apply not only to potential terrorist attacks but also to earthquakes and other natural disasters.

And that's a good thing, said Colorado's Moser. The next challenge, he said, will be convincing the public that a terrorist strike - like an earthquake - is something that can be prepared for but not necessarily prevented.

"I think we have to lay it on the table that it's a reality," Moser said.

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<http://www.tribnet.com/news/local/story/2994322p-3018557c.html>

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New York Times

April 24, 2003

U.S-Led Forces Occupy Baghdad Complex Filled With Chemical Agents

By Judith Miller

WITH MET ALPHA, in Baghdad, Iraq, April 23 — American-led forces have occupied a vast warehouse complex in Baghdad filled with chemicals where Iraqi scientists are suspected of having tested unconventional agents on dogs within the past year, according to military officers and weapons experts.

The officers and experts declined to comment on the source of the information that led them to the warehouse, given the sensitivity of both the source and current operations.

Weapons experts and officers who have seen the warehouse said it was heavily looted before members of Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha and other allied forces seized and secured it. They described it as filled with broken parts and remnants of equipment consistent with a full-scale laboratory.

This reporter was not permitted to visit the warehouse but heard descriptions of it from Americans who went to the site.

In one portion of the vast warehouse complex were rows of shelves containing chemical precursors and other materials that could be used for both peaceful and military research. Another part of the complex contained the remnants of what Iraqi and Americans said was the laboratory.

Iraqis have told American weapons experts that Iraqi scientists tested various agents on dogs and other animals at this site, the experts said.

There was no immediate way to verify this claim.

But American weapons experts have been collecting samples among the debris to test for the presence of dangerous chemicals or biological agents. The samples are being analyzed in American military labs at an undisclosed location. They are not, however, being examined in the expensive transportable labs sent to the region by the Defense Intelligence Agency's Chemical and Biological Intelligence Support Team. Those are still based far from the Iraqi capital near the Kuwaiti border.

American officials contended that the information gathered in the warehouse, along with material being collected from other sources and sites, seemed to provide some corroboration to accounts from an Iraqi scientist and others who have told Americans that President Saddam Hussein continued expanding his unconventional weapons programs while claiming to have dismantled them.

Viewed as one of the best new sources for American intelligence, the Iraqi scientist and others reported to be involved in chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, say that Mr. Hussein continued expanding his unconventional weapons research and development facilities even as he destroyed stockpiles of lethal chemical and biological weapons and agents, according to American officers and weapons experts.

According to recent American visitors, the nondescript warehouse complex was a wreck when they arrived. Bottles and vials were smashed, pieces of lab equipment were torn asunder, and shelving was pulled from the walls.

The floors were filled with debris from broken lab equipment, documents and vials. But analysts who have sifted through the debris have concluded that this was the site of a functioning laboratory not long ago.

The warehouse is large, a fairly standard size for Iraq. Baghdad has hundreds of them. As a result, one weapons expert said, finding this particular complex, or even concluding that this pile of rubble was connected with unconventional weapons, would have been virtually impossible absent Iraqis willing to discuss what had taken place.

Iraqi officials have told the Americans that Iraq's research and development system was expanded in two basic ways.

First, they have said, equipment that could be used for work on unconventional weapons was concealed in plants that made conventional arms, of which there are many in Iraq, and in other factories engaged in supposedly peaceful projects.

At an ammunition plant near the southern city of Karbala, for instance, MET Alpha members found explosive-proof glass, packages that once contained a drying oven and sophisticated laboratory equipment that MET Alpha members say could have been used in a chemical or biological laboratory for peaceful or military research.

What the giant complex was ultimately intended to make is still unclear, analysts said. But the presence of sophisticated laboratory equipment led American weapons experts who surveyed this site to conclude that the Iraqi government might have been using the ammunition plant partly to hide unconventional weapons.

Their conclusion, however, is speculative, because no such chemical or biological weapons have been found.

In one abandoned building still under construction, American weapons experts found liquid chemicals boxed for transport in containers identified as containing "instant full cream milk powder." The cartons were printed in English.

Second, Iraqis have said that Mr. Hussein's military expanded its research capability by establishing safe houses and mobile laboratories among which sensitive equipment and scientists were moved.

American military forces have not found any buried mobile labs. But experts believe that the warehouse complex may have been part of the effort to hide research activities.

While relatively little is yet known about the range of research and development that may have been conducted in this warehouse complex, American officials say that an Iraqi who recently began cooperating with American officials told weapons experts that such laboratories had experimented with increasing the deadliness of conventional weapons and chemical and germ agents permitted by treaties and agreements banning unconventional weapons.

The Americans said an Iraqi had told them that his program had succeeded in turning a chemical agent specifically permitted by the chemical weapons treaty into a lethal substance.

One weapons expert familiar with the warehouse said international inspectors could have searched for years in Iraq without seeing any telltale signatures of an unconventional weapons programs or anything particularly suspicious about the warehouse. "Everything we've seen tells us that Iraqis were masters of deception and concealment," he said. "Some of these facilities were hiding in plain sight."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/24/international/worldspecial/24CHEM.html>

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Iraqi Scientists Tipped About Inspections

By Niko Price, Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Six Iraqi scientists working at different Baghdad research institutions were ordered to destroy bacteria and equipment and hide more in their homes before visits from U.N. weapons inspectors in the months leading up to the war, the scientists say.

In separate interviews, all of the scientists said they were involved in civilian research projects and none knew of any programs for weapons of mass destruction. It was not clear why their materials, ostensibly for nonmilitary research, were ordered destroyed.

But their accounts indicate the government of Saddam Hussein may have had advance knowledge of at least some of the inspectors' visits, as the United States suspected, and that the former Iraqi regime was deeply concerned about any material that could raise the suspicion of U.N. experts.

"An hour or two before the inspectors came to the university, I got my orders from the chairman," said a biochemistry professor at Saddam University for Science and Engineering.

"The order was to hide anything that might make the inspectors suspicious. Any bacterium, any fungus. I destroyed seven petri dishes in the autoclave and I put the others in the trunk of my car."

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Saddam University's assistant dean, Ameer Abbas Ameer, said inspectors visited his university three times, checking the chemistry, biology and physics departments. He denied ordering professors and researchers to destroy or hide materials.

"The inspectors never found anything because there wasn't anything to find," he said.

But the professor and other scientists said orders came from Mr. Ameer's office, through the department chairman, to hide and destroy materials when the inspectors were on their way.

"The chairman told us not to answer questions from any inspectors, to go to the cafeteria and stay there until they left," the professor said. "They were afraid. What they were afraid of, I don't know."

President Bush said during his State of the Union address that Iraqi spies had infiltrated the U.N. inspection team. While some inspectors privately suspect as much, none of the teams found any firm evidence to support the president's claim.

"Clearly, we were well aware that the Iraqis were trying to figure out our inspection plans and we took many practicable precautions against that," said Ewen Buchanan, spokesman for the U.N. inspectors.

He said information was handled on a "need to know" basis and precautions included "silent briefings" between inspectors to elude any listening devices the Iraqis may have placed at U.N. offices in Baghdad.

U.N. inspectors returned to Iraq last November after a four-year hiatus.

Over a period of 3½ months, they conducted hundreds of visits to factories, universities and military facilities.

Despite the insistence of the Bush administration that Iraq had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs, the inspectors found no such evidence before the U.S.-led war on Iraq forced them to leave in mid-March.

The United States now has deployed its own inspectors, and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Negroponte made clear Tuesday that the Bush administration doesn't want the U.N. team to return anytime soon.

Chief U.N. weapons inspector Hans Blix said he didn't see "any adversarial arrangement" between his inspectors and the U.S.-led coalition's teams.

"We're all interested in finding the truth about the situation, whatever it is," he said.

However, in an interview to British Broadcasting Corp. on Tuesday, Mr. Blix said the United States and Britain exaggerated assertions that Saddam had amassed weapons of mass destruction.

"I think it's been one of the disturbing elements that so much of the intelligence on which the capitals built their case seemed to have been shaky," he said.

So far, U.S. forces have found no conclusive evidence that Iraq has banned weapons. None of the scientists interviewed by reporters in their homes and on campuses said they had any such information to provide.

At a biotechnology laboratory at the Baghdad University for Science and Engineering, researcher Majid Rasheed said inspectors visited three times, but that his chairman had ordered investigators to destroy and hide materials in November, just as the inspections resumed.

Mr. Rasheed said some basic materials were destroyed just to avoid any suspicions that they could be used for military purposes.

"We took home media for culturing bacteria and shaker-incubators used for fermentation," he said. "Now we will bring them back."

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20030424-35984336.htm>

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Philadelphia Inquirer

April 24, 2003

'Chemical Ali' Possibly Survived

The Hussein ally reportedly died in a raid in Basra. Hospital workers say he was in Baghdad days later.

By Juan O. Tamayo, Knight Ridder News Service

BAGHDAD - Hospital workers say they saw the infamous Saddam Hussein henchman known as "Chemical Ali" alive in Baghdad just before the city fell, contradicting British army reports that he had been killed in an air raid on a house in the southern city of Basra days earlier.

The eyewitness reports that Ali Hassan al-Majid, who ordered poison-gas attacks on Kurdish villages in 1988 that killed 5,000 civilians, was at the Baghdad Nursing Hospital on April 6 or 7 is an indication of how little is known about the whereabouts of Hussein's inner circle, both during the war and now.

Many of the 55 most-wanted figures of the regime, displayed on playing cards distributed by the American military, seem to have vanished. Eleven reportedly are in U.S. custody. Three are believed to have been killed.

Majid, who is the king of spades in the U.S. deck, was reported killed in air raids, first on March 22 and then again April 5.

But two workers at the nursing hospital, an elite 250-bed facility that is part of the huge Saddam Hospital complex, said a healthy Majid turned up at the hospital after the April 5 air attack.

"Of course I was very, very surprised to see him, because the radio said he was killed," said a nurse at the hospital, who asked that his name not be used.

Dr. Abdel Azziz al-Bayaah, the hospital's director, said Majid, Defense Minister Sultan Hashem Ahmed, an Iraqi bodyguard, and about 10 non-Iraqi gunmen left the hospital the morning of April 6 or 7 after spending the night while doctors treated Ahmed and the Iraqi bodyguard.

Bayaah said the hospital's staff had no choice but to be host to the group. "You know the position in which we are," he said.

Majid and his entourage arrived at the hospital between 7 and 8 p.m. "two or three days before Baghdad fell" on April 9, said the nurse, who treated the bodyguard.

Majid, wearing his spinach-green army general's uniform but no name tag, identified himself and called the bodyguard "one of his dearest friends," the nurse said.

"Don't worry. Baghdad will not fall. We are powerful and we are everywhere," the nurse quoted Majid as telling the hospital's staff.

The guard had light glass shrapnel wounds on his face and chest, and during his brief treatment said the group had been driving around the city when another car drove up and shot at them, the nurse added.

One of the non-Iraqi guards also was wounded, in the buttocks, but was embarrassed and refused treatment, the nurse said. He believed the non-Iraqis to be Syrian Islamic radicals because of their accents, civilian clothes and long beards.

The nurse said Majid's entourage spent the night in the makeshift emergency room the hospital had prepared on the first floor for war casualties, and was gone when he returned to the ward after breakfast about 10:30 a.m.

The nurse said he was later told that Majid had driven up in "common cars" - not the luxury vehicles usually issued to top regime leaders - paid "a lot of money" to Bayaah and a Health Ministry official, Dr. Munnah Ibrahim, to keep quiet about his stay, and then left, a changed man, the next morning.

"At night he seemed powerful and self-assured. But the other nurses told me that by morning he seemed broken. He changed to [traditional] Arab clothes, shaved off his mustache, and escaped in ambulances."

Nonsense, Bayaah said. Majid was still wearing his uniform and mustache when Bayaah accompanied the entourage to its Japanese-made sedans and pickup trucks that morning, Bayaah said.

Only Ahmed left in an ambulance. Bayaah said that was because recent brain surgery had left the defense minister with intense vertigo and headaches.

Asked about the money that Majid allegedly paid him and Ibrahim, Bayaah said: "I have nothing to do with that money." Staffers at Ibrahim's nearby office said she had not shown up at work for two days. Majid hosted a meeting in a hospital conference room before he left, another nurse said, and left behind a military map of Baghdad, marked "secret" and with several pinholes clustered around the northern part of the city. Handwritten along the top of the map were the words Al Tarmiya and Al Mishahde, two predominantly Sunni Muslim suburbs north of the capital known to be centers of support for Hussein.
<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/5701544.htm>

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Washington Times
April 24, 2003
Pg. 1

N. Korea Reiterates Plans For Fuel Rods

Starts talks vowing reprocessing work

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

North Korea opened a meeting with U.S. and Chinese officials in Beijing yesterday with a tough reiteration of its plans to reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods now in storage.

U.S. intelligence agencies, however, have not confirmed that the North Koreans have begun reprocessing about 8,000 spent fuel rods that were supposed to remain in storage under a 1994 agreement with the United States. Bush administration officials told The Washington Times that the North Korean official in charge of the talks, Ri Gun, who is the Foreign Ministry deputy director for American affairs, opened the talks by telling the U.S. delegation about the reprocessing.

The North Koreans "made it clear they are moving ahead with reprocessing," said one official familiar with intelligence reports of the opening session of the talks in Beijing.

Another official said trucks have been spotted recently at the fuel rod storage facility at North Korea's nuclear complex at Yongbyon, which could indicate movement to a reprocessing facility at the same site. No reprocessing, however, has been detected, the official said.

A National Security Council spokesman did not comment.

The issue of reprocessing the spent fuel rods, which yields weapons-grade plutonium, is viewed as the critical "point of no return" in effective efforts to prevent North Korea from building nuclear weapons.

The North Korean statement in Beijing is the latest twist in a confusing series of remarks by Pyongyang on the nuclear reprocessing.

The official Korean Central News Agency stated Friday that the communist government was "successfully reprocessing" the nuclear rods. Three days later, a different English translation of the official statement said that North Korea is "successfully going forward to reprocess work" on the rods.

The statement initially had been read by some U.S. administration officials as a sharp escalation of the nuclear crisis. The declaration at the closed-door Beijing meeting was a reiteration of Monday's translation.

In Tokyo, a visiting Russian Foreign Ministry official said the U.S.-North Korean nuclear standoff has been "pushed to the limit."

"It is probable that as early as tomorrow events may take a disastrous course," Alexander Losyukov told reporters after meeting Japanese officials.

The U.S. delegation to the talks is led by James Kelly, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific affairs, and the Chinese side is led by Foreign Ministry official Fu Ying.

Mr. Kelly urged the North Koreans to adhere to the provisions of the 1994 Agreed Framework and to follow other agreements aimed at limiting nuclear weapons development, said officials familiar with the talks.

The 1994 agreement required North Korea to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for Western help in meeting its fuel needs, including shipments of fuel oil and the construction of two light-water nuclear reactors that generate electricity but are less useful in nuclear-arms production.

Officials said it is not clear whether the North Korean statement on the fuel rods is an opening negotiating ploy or whether Pyongyang is indeed taking steps to reprocess the rods.

U.S. intelligence agencies are closely monitoring a five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon. Special nuclear "sniffer" aircraft have conducted flights to try to detect any nuclear activity there.

"We have seen lights on and people [at the reprocessing facility], but we don't know what is going on inside," one official said.

The three-way talks are the first meeting on the North Korean nuclear crisis since Pyongyang disclosed to Mr. Kelly in October that it had a covert uranium-enrichment program outside the Agreed Framework.

North Korea has since withdrawn from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and in February, satellite and aircraft monitoring detected the start of the Yongbyon reactor. The United States has halted the fuel-oil deliveries and put the construction of the nuclear plants on hold.

American officials close to the talks have said the United States is seeking a "verifiable, irreversible end to North Korea's nuclear program."

In Beijing, Mr. Kelly told reporters after the first meeting, "No words today, thank you." The talks are set to continue through tomorrow.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said yesterday that the Beijing talks are an opportunity for the three sides to present their views.

"In this first set of meetings, nothing is being put on the table," Mr. Powell said in an interview with CBS News.

"They will hear what we think about the situation. They will hear our strong views. We expect the North Koreans to present their views strongly, and we certainly expect the Chinese to present their views strongly."

The CIA stated in an unclassified estimate of the North Korean nuclear program that reprocessing the fuel rods would produce "enough plutonium for several more weapons."

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said last week that North Korea's reprocessing of the fuel rods to extract plutonium would be "an extremely serious matter."

Mr. Boucher provided no details of the talks.

"Multilateral talks began later in the morning and went into late afternoon, with all three sides participating and presenting their views," he told reporters.

Mr. Kelly later provided briefings on the meeting to representatives of the South Korean and Japanese governments, the spokesman said.

Seoul and Tokyo were blocked from participating in the talks, but the United States hopes that its two Asian allies will be admitted later.

North Korea had demanded one-on-one talks with the United States and settled for only adding China, an ally, as a compromise. Many observers said the North Koreans agreed to the talks after the rapid U.S. military victory in Iraq.

In Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov said Russia would participate in expanded talks on the nuclear crisis if asked.

South Korean Defense Minister Cho Young-kil said in Seoul on Tuesday that North Korea has not started to reprocess the spent fuel.

"We suspect that North Korea has completed preparations for reprocessing the fuel rods but it has not yet started doing so," the official Yonhap news agency cited Mr. Cho as telling the South Korean legislature.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030424-83099684.htm>

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Los Angeles Times

April 24, 2003

China Looks Like Winner In N. Korea Talks

Using its leverage on its reclusive neighbor, Beijing plays a key role in bringing U.S. and Pyongyang together to discuss region's stability.

By Ching-Ching Ni, Times Staff Writer

BEIJING — During the Korean War, China sent a million troops to help its communist ally, North Korea, fight the United States. Five decades later, Pyongyang and Washington again face each other with the region's peace and stability at stake.

Once again, China has a key role, but this time, it is trying to make peace, not war.

At Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guest House, the complex of villas reserved for visiting foreigners, officials from the United States sat down with North Korea on Wednesday. It was the first face-to-face meeting since October, when North Korea told the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly that it was trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Kelly, who represented the United States Wednesday, wouldn't discuss the first day of talks. But few expect much to come out of the closed-door meetings scheduled to end Friday. North Korea sent a low-level ministerial representative, an indication that these sessions would likely only lay the groundwork for a long negotiating process.

But China appears to have already come out ahead. By brokering and hosting the three-way talks, Beijing has shown a rare willingness to play a constructive leadership role in global affairs.

"It's an amazing change. In the past, whenever China's been in an international crisis, it's been part of the problem," said Orville Schell, a longtime China watcher at UC Berkeley. "Here, even if the talks fail, it's positioning itself as part of the solution. This represents something of a breakthrough for China."

Since embarking on a course of economic reforms in the last two decades, Beijing decided to keep a low profile in international politics. Chinese officials wanted to avoid setting any precedent that would allow other countries to interfere in such controversial issues as Taiwan and Tibet independence.

But the destabilizing potential of the North Korean crisis forced China to think more flexibly about the idea of noninterference and the price of inaction, analysts said.

"What we're witnessing is a slow evolution of China's rigid notion of absolute sovereignty and its emergence into a much more global community where sovereignty is breached all the time, through trade, humanitarian aid, multinational corporations and international protocols, which represent countries coming together rather than countries being isolated and independent," said Schell.

Tensions rose last October, when Pyongyang admitted having a uranium-based nuclear weapons program. Beijing watched from the sidelines as the North Koreans upped the ante by throwing out international inspectors, pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and restarting its nuclear reactors.

Pyongyang demanded bilateral talks with Washington and guarantees that the United States wouldn't invade or terminate desperately needed economic aid. But the Bush administration insisted it wouldn't meet until Kim Jong Il dismantled his nuclear facilities and agreed to multilateral talks. The standoff continued even as the U.S. began military action in Iraq.

Meanwhile, China had quietly begun calculating its own interests and diplomatic options. From its perspective, a nuclear Korean Peninsula could have disastrous consequences for China if it triggered an arms race involving Japan and South Korea.

The United States said it wanted a diplomatic solution, but there were fears that if the U.S. took military action, it would damage China's economic stability, especially if Pyongyang allowed a flood of refugees to cross its border with China. The demise of North Korea would leave Beijing without a security buffer in the highly militarized region and take away any leverage it might have in influencing Korean reunification.

"It's a combination of North Korea escalating the crisis to the point China saw as dangerous and the fact that the two sides did not appear to be able to get talks going on their own that prompted China to take a more active role," said Phillip Saunders from the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

As North Korea's longtime ally and biggest supplier of food and fuel, China was in the best position to force the reclusive nation to the bargaining table. Beijing sent a high-level envoy to Pyongyang in March to privately deliver the message that it could not count on Beijing to support irrational brinkmanship. China briefly shut off gas pipelines to the north as a signal it means business.

Yet publicly, China stood by Pyongyang by opposing sanctions and preventing the U.N. Security Council from taking up the matter. China knows North Korea does not respond well to pressure alone. Pushing it against the wall would only cause the regime to lash out in dangerous ways.

Even if these talks flop, China might still emerge as an all-around winner. Japan and South Korea didn't get a seat at the table, but they have indicated that they are pleased with the way China seized the political limelight to defuse tensions rather than dodge the issue, which is what Beijing had been doing.

As for Washington, it has lavished repeated praise on Beijing for stepping up to the plate. It may just be the thing the United States and China need to fortify their fragile ties.

"China has been trying hard to improve relations," said Saunders.

"Post-Sept. 11th, they saw the fight against terrorism as a basis to stabilize bilateral relations. The Korean crisis provides another opportunity to show China can play a very positive role in maintaining stability in East Asia."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-korea24apr241.1,5247743.story?coll=la%2Dhome%2Dtoday%2Dtimes>

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Washington Times

April 24, 2003

Pg. 5

Pills Seen As Useless Against 'Dirty Bomb'

By Audrey Hudson, The Washington Times

Ingesting potassium iodide would protect against cancer after a nuclear explosion but not after a dirty bomb blast, according to a study published in today's Journal of the American Medical Association. Potassium iodide pills could block thyroid cancer after a nuclear bomb or nuclear reactor meltdown on the same scale as Chernobyl or larger, said doctors attending a recent forum sponsored by the American Thyroid Association and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists. But in the event of a so-called dirty bomb attack, which terrorism experts believe is much more likely than a thermonuclear blast, potassium iodide would be useless, said Dr. E. Dillwyn Williams, emeritus professor of histopathology at the University of Cambridge, England. Dr. Williams and other speakers at the forum said a dirty bomb uses conventional explosives to disperse radioactive material and would not produce iodine 131, the key radioactive isotope, in the resulting fallout. "As fears of nuclear terrorism rise along with apprehensions about conventional and biological attacks, some media outlets have recommended that residents of large U.S. cities keep a supply of over-the-counter potassium iodide on hand," Brian Vastag wrote in JAMA's April 23 edition. In February, the Homeland Security Department initiated a readiness campaign against terrorist attacks that lists potassium iodide as the top item to be kept in an emergency kit. "If there is a significant radiation threat, health care authorities may or may not advise you to take potassium iodide," says the information on preparing for a nuclear blast. "Potassium iodide is the same stuff added to your table salt to make it iodized," the guidelines say. "It may or may not protect your thyroid gland, which is particularly vulnerable from radioactive iodine exposure." To protect against a dirty bomb, however, the Homeland Security Department offers little advice except to "limit exposure." "The farther away you are away from the blast and the fallout the lower your exposure," the precautions state. The most conclusive data on potassium iodide comes from studies after the 1986 partial reactor meltdown at Chernobyl in the former Soviet Union. Data collected from 25,000 children in Belarus and Ukraine showed potassium iodide was effective if taken right after the first exposure. <http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030424-88088736.htm>

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Washington Post
April 25, 2003
Pg. 1

N. Korea Says It Has Nuclear Arms

At Talks With U.S., Pyongyang Threatens 'Demonstration' or Export of Weapon

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

North Korean negotiators have told U.S. officials in Beijing that the communist nation has nuclear weapons and threatened to export them or conduct a "physical demonstration," U.S. officials said yesterday.

Pyongyang has never before said it had nuclear weapons, though the CIA has estimated it has produced one or possibly two devices. North Korea's unexpected declaration is certain to alarm its neighbors and heighten the crisis atmosphere over its nuclear ambitions.

But North Korea also hinted it might be willing to eventually give up its weapons, officials said, which some saw as a small ray of hope amid the bluster of the North Korean stance.

Speaking in Washington, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell warned North Korea that the United States would not "be intimidated by bellicose statements or by threats or actions they think might get them more attention or might force us to make a concession that we would not otherwise make."

"They're back to the old blackmail game," President Bush said last night in an interview on NBC.

U.S. officials said North Korea declared it had nuclear weapons as officials were milling about in corridors on Wednesday, the first day of the talks among the United States, North Korea and China. The top North Korean official at the talks, Li Gun, pulled aside the highest-ranking American present, Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly, and told him that North Korea had nuclear weapons. "We can't dismantle them," Li told Kelly. "It's up to you whether we do a physical demonstration or transfer them."

U.S. officials are still puzzling over the statement and its exact meaning, including whether North Korea was threatening to test a nuclear weapon. But, a senior official said, "it was very fast, very categorical and obviously very scripted."

The North Koreans appeared to play down their admission, saying they had told the United States in 1993 they had nuclear weapons. But U.S. officials have contacted former Clinton administration officials and there appears to be no record of such a statement. North Korea has a history of claiming it made statements in the past that were never made.

During the plenary session, Li, deputy director of American affairs for North Korea's Foreign Ministry, also told the Americans that North Korea has just about completed reprocessing 8,000 spent fuel rods into plutonium for weapons -- a statement not confirmed by U.S. intelligence. Officials believe that may just be a bluff, but it is a sobering bluff: Analysts have said the fuel rods could be turned into material for two to three nuclear bombs within a few months. During the talks, Kelly pressed to confirm that Li truly meant to say the reprocessing has been completed, because North Korean officials have made contradictory statements in the past. If the North Korean assertion about reprocessing is correct, it would signify a massive intelligence failure by the United States.

The crisis began in October, when Washington said North Korea admitted to a covert program to make highly enriched uranium for nuclear arms. It intensified earlier this year, when North Korea restarted a plutonium reactor it had frozen under a 1994 pact with the United States.

During this week's talks, the North Koreans outlined what was described as an extensive proposal for ending the crisis. In effect, U.S. officials said, North Korea wants to reestablish the 1994 agreement under which it would give up its nuclear programs in exchange for a steady supply of energy -- but the dismantling of the programs would only take place once Washington fulfilled its end of the bargain.

The U.S. delegation emphasized that the administration would accept nothing less than the complete and verifiable dismantling of North Korea's nuclear programs, including the restoration of international inspections, before progress could be made on other areas of the U.S.-North Korean relationship.

The U.S. delegation was under strict instructions not to negotiate. Still, one official said, the small opening in the North Korean statement might provide a reason to continue to another round of talks.

The official said North Korea's Kim Jong Il apparently does not realize Bush has no intention of cutting a deal along the lines of the 1994 pact. "Kim will not get this president's attention without getting rid of his nuclear programs," he said.

State Department spokesman Richard A. Boucher said the administration would carefully review the talks before deciding how to respond. The North Koreans "said a lot of things that require careful analysis before anybody jumps out and makes grand pronouncements on it means this and it means that," he said.

"The story should not be that San Francisco is about to be incinerated," one government official said. "This is the beginning of a long process."

Yesterday, the second day of the talks, the three parties did not meet together. Instead, China held separate sessions with the United States and with North Korea. U.S. officials said it was unclear if any further talks would take place on the planned third day. Kelly planned to leave Friday for Seoul and Tokyo to brief the South Koreans and Japanese.

In its first official comment on the talks, China, a major supplier of food and energy to North Korea, said yesterday the discussions had helped promote understanding and would help in finding a solution. But a U.S. official said that Chinese privately were "in disbelief over Li Gun's categorical statements" and disappointed that the United States and North Korea had such intractable positions.

During the talks, U.S. officials said, China said it supported a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and noted that North Korea had promised South Korea in 1992 that Pyongyang would not develop nuclear weapons.

"Strong views were presented" at the talks, Powell said. "The North Koreans presented their point of view strongly; the Chinese did, as well, as did the United States."

North Korea, meanwhile, said yesterday it was ready to settle the dispute but that the "master key" for successful talks was for the United States to drop its hostile policy toward Pyongyang.

"The situation on the Korean Peninsula is so tense that a war may break out any moment due to the U.S. moves," North Korea's KCNA news agency said, adding that relations with the United States had hit "rock bottom" because of Bush's statement that North Korea was part of an "axis of evil," along with Iran and Iraq.

KCNA said the war in Iraq had shown the only way for a country to protect itself was to have a strong military deterrent.

A senior administration official said that U.S. intelligence agencies had no indication that North Korea was acting on its threat, either to test or to export nuclear material or weapons.

"If they only have two nuclear bombs" and they conduct a test, "they'll rapidly run through their stock," said the official.

Correspondent John Pomfret in Beijing and staff writer Dana Priest in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A32198-2003Apr24.html>

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New York Times
April 25, 2003

Bush Says Arms Will Be Found, With Iraqi Aid

By Richard W. Stevenson and David E. Sanger

WASHINGTON, April 24 — President Bush said today that Iraqi officials and scientists had provided the United States with information that Saddam Hussein may have destroyed or dispersed chemical and biological weapons before the war, suggesting that the search for proof of an Iraqi weapons program could be a long one.

Responding to speculation about Mr. Hussein's fate, the president said that there was considerable evidence that he was dead or severely wounded but that the United States did not have definitive proof, like DNA, that the Iraqi leader had been killed.

Mr. Bush also said the resistance faced by American troops in southern Iraq in the conflict's first weeks was fiercer than he had expected, an admission that seemed at odds with the Pentagon's insistence at the time that the war was unfolding according to plan.

"Shock and awe said to many people that all we've got to do is unleash some might and people will crumble," Mr. Bush said in an interview with NBC News, his most extensive since the invasion of Iraq. "And it turns out the fighters were a lot fiercer than we thought."

Mr. Bush gave a detailed account of how the war looked from his perspective as commander in chief. He said he had some initial concerns about the first blow of the war, his last-minute decision to bomb a home in Baghdad where an agent had reported that Mr. Hussein and his sons might be spending the night.

"I was hesitant at first, to be frank with you," Mr. Bush said, "because I was worried that the first pictures coming out of Iraq would be a wounded grandchild of Saddam Hussein."

But in the end, Mr. Bush said, he was convinced that he had a good opportunity to kill Mr. Hussein. The agent who provided the information from the scene, he added, judged the bombing a success.

"He felt like we got Saddam," the president said, adding that the evidence about Mr. Hussein's fate remained uncertain but that if he was not killed he was severely wounded.

Asked if it might take two years to bring stability to Iraq, Mr. Bush replied: "It could, it could. Or less. Who knows?"

Mr. Bush did not elaborate on the evidence that the United States has gathered since the war's end about Iraq's weapons programs. He acknowledged that questions about the credibility of the United States would not be put to rest until weapons were found.

"I think there's going to be skepticism until people find out there was, in fact, a weapons of mass destruction program," he said.

Despite that, he expressed confidence that American forces would eventually find chemical and biological weapons.

"We are learning more as we interrogate or have discussions with Iraqi scientists and people within the Iraqi structure, that perhaps he destroyed some, perhaps he dispersed some," Mr. Bush said.

Mr. Bush said the United States had so far examined only 90 of the hundreds of sites that Mr. Hussein and his government might have used to hide the weapons. But the sites that have been examined are those designated by the administration as most likely to conceal weapons.

"And so we will find them," Mr. Bush said in the interview, conducted today by Tom Brokaw aboard Air Force One between the president's appearances in Ohio. "But it's going to take time to find them. And the best way to find them is to continue to collect information from the humans, Iraqis who were involved in hiding them."

In an interview last week, a senior administration official who had reviewed the same intelligence on the weapons program that Mr. Bush had seen said it was unclear what kind of chemical and biological stores the United States would find.

"It's possible that they had the precursors, the raw stuff, but they did not weaponize it," the official said. "We just don't know yet."

But the senior official said there was no real concern in the administration that nothing of importance would be found. "We couldn't have been that far off," the official said.

In describing the war from his perspective, Mr. Bush combined acknowledgments of doubts and pressures with accounts of dramatic moments and humor, including his fascination with the relentlessly upbeat accounts of heroic Iraqi resistance provided by the information minister, Muhammad Said al-Sahhaf.

"He's my man; he was great," said a laughing Mr. Bush. "Somebody accused us of hiring him and putting him there. He was a classic."

The meeting in the White House situation room on March 19 at which he gave Gen. Tommy R. Franks the go-ahead to begin the war was "an emotional moment," Mr. Bush said.

"I then went outside and walked around the grounds, just to get a little air and collect my thoughts," he recounted. But the plan he had just settled on, calling for Special Forces to begin operating in Iraq, was quickly overtaken by new intelligence about Mr. Hussein's whereabouts.

Mr. Bush recounted how an agent who called in to Central Command from outside a residential compound in Baghdad was able to provide firmer and firmer intelligence throughout that afternoon.

"There in the Oval Office, we were getting near-instant feedback from eyes on the ground," Mr. Bush said. "It was an amazing moment to think that a person risking his life, viewing the farms, watching the entries, seeing, observing what was taking place inside one of Saddam's most guarded facilities, was able to pick up a device, call Centcom, and Centcom would call us."

Asked whether the agent was alive, the president said: "Yes he is. He is with us. Thank God. A brave soul."

Mr. Bush had nothing nice to say about President Jacques Chirac of France, who led the opposition to a United Nations resolution authorizing the use of military force against Iraq. "I doubt he'll be coming to the ranch anytime soon," Mr. Bush said, saying it appeared to many in his administration "that the French position was anti-American." He expressed fear that the disagreement would weaken the NATO alliance, and in recent days some administration officials have been talking about marginalizing France within NATO.

"Hopefully," Mr. Bush said, "the past tensions will subside, and the French won't be using their position within Europe to create alliances against the United States, or Britain, or Spain, or any of the new countries that are the new democracies in Europe."

Mr. Bush made it clear that Turkey's refusal to allow American forces to invade Iraq from the north had in his view made the war more difficult and bloody.

"Because, for example, we didn't come north from Turkey, Saddam Hussein was able to move a lot of special Republican Guard units and fighters from north to south," Mr. Bush said.

The result was that American forces faced "significant resistance," the president said.

For the first time, Mr. Bush acknowledged that he was concerned about power vacuums in Iraq "being filled by Iranian agents." On Wednesday, the White House said it had warned Iran not to interfere with American efforts to build an "Islamic democracy" in Iraq.

"We have sent the word to the Iranians that's what we expect," he said, adding that he had talked to Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain and Jose Maria Aznar of Spain about that subject on Wednesday, to get them "to send the same message."

But he made no threats against Iran, and said "we have no military plans" to deal with the country. He noted that he had sent a similar message to Syria, where officials were responding.

Mr. Bush's overt use of diplomatic pressure against Syria and Iran, two countries that Mr. Bush has identified as sponsors of terrorism, is in stark contrast to the use of preemptive force against Iraq.

Yet at one point in his interview, Mr. Bush acknowledged that he had yet to fully form the "Bush doctrine," or to think through how the American victory in Iraq would affect his vow to deal with weapons of mass destruction on a global basis.

He also said that he would "work hard to achieve a two-state solution" in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute and that he now had an opportunity to attempt that. "I think it will accelerate" he said of the peace process, "and, hopefully, greatly." But he added, "I'm not so sure what that exactly means."

Even when the fighting was toughest, a time when many commentators were raising questions about the military strategy and predicting a long, difficult war, Mr. Bush said his faith in the war plan never wavered.

"I had confidence in the plan, because I had confidence in my national security team," Mr. Bush said.

But he said there were low moments along the way, including the day when five American soldiers were taken prisoner of war. One of the high points, he said, was the rescue of Pfc. Jessica D. Lynch.

"Secretary Rumsfeld told me not to get my hopes up, but there was going to be a very sensitive operation into a hospital where he thought that there would be an American P.O.W.," Mr. Bush said. "And then when we heard that she had been rescued, it was a joyous moment."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/25/international/worldspecial/25INTE.html>

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U.S. Has Not Inspected Iraqi Nuclear Facility

Site That Contained Uranium Was Looted After War

By Barton Gellman, Washington Post Staff Writer

KUWAIT CITY, April 24 -- Nearly three weeks after U.S. forces reached Iraq's most important nuclear facility, the Bush administration has yet to begin an assessment of whether tons of radioactive material there remain intact, according to military officials here and in Washington.

Before the war began last month, the vast Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Center held 3,896 pounds of partially enriched uranium, more than 94 tons of natural uranium and smaller quantities of cesium, cobalt and strontium, according to reports compiled through the 1990s by inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency. Immensely valuable on the international black market, the uranium was in a form suitable for further enrichment to "weapons grade," the core of a nuclear device. The other substances, products of medical and industrial waste, emit intense radiation. They have been sought, officials said, by terrorists seeking to build a so-called dirty bomb, which uses conventional explosives to scatter dangerous radioactive particles.

Defense officials acknowledge that the U.S. government has no idea whether any of Tuwaitha's potentially deadly contents have been stolen, because it has not dispatched investigators to appraise the site. What it does know, according to officials at the Pentagon and U.S. Central Command, is that the sprawling campus, 11 miles south of Baghdad, lay unguarded for days and that looters made their way inside.

Tuwaitha is headquarters of Iraq's Atomic Energy Agency, with hundreds of structures covering some 120 acres. At the height of Iraq's clandestine nuclear weapons program, which nearly succeeded in building a bomb in 1991, Tuwaitha incorporated research reactors, uranium mining and enrichment facilities, chemical engineering plants and an explosives fabrication center to build the device that detonates a nuclear core.

The facility was inspected more often than any other site by U.N. inspectors, who began disarming Iraq under U.N. Security Council mandate in 1991.

Disputes inside the U.S. Defense Department and with other government agencies have slowed the preparation of orders for a team of nuclear experts to assess Tuwaitha, officials said. Though it anticipated for months that war would leave it with responsibility for Iraq's nuclear infrastructure, the Bush administration did not reach consensus on the role it would seek at those facilities.

President Bush's senior advisers have accused the IAEA, under Director General Mohamed ElBaradei, of being hostile to U.S. objectives in Iraq. Civilian policy officials in the Pentagon, according to people with first-hand knowledge, initially proposed to make a complete inspection of Tuwaitha without the IAEA -- an exercise that apparently would have required U.S. government experts to break seals the agency's inspectors placed on safeguarded nuclear materials. The nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, of which the United States is a signatory, gives the IAEA exclusive authority over those seals.

Strong objections came from other parts of the Pentagon policy apparatus and from the State Department offices responsible for treaty compliance, international organizations and nonproliferation.

The unresolved dispute has prevented Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld from issuing guidance to U.S. Central Command that would define the objectives and limits of a site survey.

Lt. Col. Michael W. Slifka, a senior leader at Central Command's Sensitive Site Exploitation Planning Team, said U.S. forces had not broken any IAEA seals. But he said in an interview here that he did not know whether seals had been broken by others, because he had not been authorized to dispatch a team with nuclear experts from the Energy Department's national laboratories.

"For force protection reasons, because of the folks we've got there," Slifka said, "we aren't in a position to go inside."

"The site is now secured by coalition forces," he said. "They're safeguarded." Slifka said technicians had taken readings and "established safe zones" to protect U.S. forces and civilians, "but we've left it at that."

A defense official made available to describe the policy tonight said there are "tentative plans" for "a U.S. assessment team to enter the site once a team can be organized and properly equipped." The official emphasized that the team would not break IAEA seals and added: "The issue of the IAEA's role in this process will be addressed once we have a better idea from the assessment team on the actual status of the buildings, containers and materials at the site."

A second official said that formula only deferred the harder questions. "The intent is to inventory the site and to make a determination what if anything is missing," he said, and that cannot be done without a full inspection.

Outside experts expressed astonishment today that the government had not treated the possibility of missing nuclear materials with greater urgency.

"It's extremely surprising," said Corey Hinderstein, deputy director of the Institute for Science and International Security, when told that U.S. nuclear experts had not yet been to Tuwaitha. "I would have hoped that they would try to assess as quickly as possible whether the site had been breached. If there is radiological material on the loose in Iraq, with the chance that it may be transferred across borders, it would be extremely important to know that [in order] to prevent it from crossing a border or being transferred to a terrorist or another state."

Working through the late 1990s against what it then called "Iraq's prevarication" and an "endeavor to conceal the [nuclear weapons] program in its entirety," the IAEA seized more than 100 pounds of highly enriched uranium -- sufficient to build a nuclear bomb -- and supervised the destruction of a weapons infrastructure encompassing 10 major centers around Iraq.

The agency eventually concluded that the weapons program had been expunged, an assessment disputed by the Bush White House. The IAEA turned to "ongoing monitoring and verification" of sites it had already disarmed. As part of that effort, it placed tamper-proof seals on many rooms at Tuwaitha and on at least 409 barrels of radioactive material.

Until fighting began on March 19, those seals were believed to have remained intact and Tuwaitha's three major storage structures were secured by Iraq's Special Republican Guard. But when a U.S. Marine engineers reached the site on April 6, the Marines found it abandoned.

Iraqi locals told the Marines, according to situation reports sent through Central Command, that the last of the guards had departed four days earlier. The Marines reported that some of the buildings showed evident signs of looting. Until receiving reinforcements, the small unit was unable to prevent further intrusions by Iraqis who cut through barbed wire fencing and stole inside.

The IAEA's ElBaradei has said publicly that his agency holds the only lawful authority over Tuwaitha's safeguarded materials. Officials in the U.S. government and the IAEA said there have been no substantive discussions between them on the terms of a postwar survey there.

"It's worrisome," said an expert with long experience at Tuwaitha who is familiar with ElBaradei's views. The IAEA, he said, "would like to quickly understand if there has been any diversion, any disappearance, because the sooner we know, the sooner we can do something about it."

Staff researcher Robert Thomason contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35498-2003Apr24.html>

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New York Times

April 25, 2003

Specialists Deploying To Disable Any Arms

By William J. Broad

Teams of military experts are preparing to leave for Iraq next week to disable and destroy any chemical, biological or other unconventional weapons that are found, defense officials said.

Though the endeavor is somewhat scaled back from the original plan, they said, it is to involve two large American contractors and hundreds of military and civilian specialists who will probably stay for about a year.

A main goal is to set up a central base where any unconventional arms could be stored under tight security and then destroyed.

Officials said the base would probably be at the Muthanna State Enterprise, a former Iraqi chemical weapons plant. Isolated in the desert some 40 miles northwest of Baghdad, the sprawling site offers infrastructure that the American teams can easily adapt to the storage and destruction job, officials said.

While they acknowledge that some military and civilian experts doubt that intact weapons will be found, the defense officials said prudence required them to prepare for the possibility.

"One of the challenges we have in planning is we don't know the scope of the mission," said Dr. Stephen M. Younger, director of the Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, which leads the effort.

"If nothing is found, we'll have nothing to eliminate," Dr. Younger added. "But I'm reasonably confident that things will be found."

In addition to arms, the teams are charged with destroying "dual use" factories, technologies and other materials that could be used for civilian purposes as well as for unconventional weapons, officials said.

With some types of equipment, the legitimate applications are so few, and so inconsequential, that the gear is considered suspect in the wrong hands. A senior defense official with knowledge of the program said high-level American authorities and the interim administration in Iraq might clash on occasion over what constituted dangerous dual-use materials, but that in the end they would undoubtedly agree on definitions.

The destruction effort's overall planning, an official added, has been relatively modest. "We're trying to be ready for what may be found and scale up if it's more than that," he said.

The defense officials said while the teams now preparing to go to Iraq are organized by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, a Pentagon unit specializing in arms elimination, in the field they will report to the United States Central Command.

The disabling and elimination effort is a follow to the hunt, unsuccessful so far, for unconventional arms. Troops have detectors to identify germs, chemicals and sources of radioactivity. Behind them, with better gear and skills, is the 75th Exploitation Task Force, a large unit with more elaborate equipment for detecting unconventional weapons. The senior official said the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, after months of planning, created a directorate for the elimination of Iraqi unconventional arms on March 22, and that its director is Douglas M. Englund, a retired Army colonel with long experience in arms control and weapons elimination.

The disablement teams will have up to 100 members and separate units focusing on specific types of weapons. There is one nuclear team, one rocket team and four teams for biological and chemical weapons.

Dr. Younger said two American businesses were under contract to assist the effort to dismantle and neutralize any unconventional weapons found in the region: the Raytheon Corporation of Lexington, Mass., and the Kellogg, Brown & Root unit of the Halliburton Corporation of Houston. Vice President Dick Cheney served as chief executive of Halliburton from 1995 until 2000.

The senior defense official said the total cost of the two contracts was less than \$5 million in their first phase. He added that the next phase was in negotiation.

The official said the initial contracts were given out late last month and that the two contractors have 60 days to identify and prepare for the overseas deployment of about 60 civilians each, for a total of 120 people. They are to be ready to go by May 20, with the personnel all trained, given necessary vaccinations and possessing the gear needed for the mission.

Kellogg, Brown & Root builds military bases, the official said, "and they're taking the lead in that." Raytheon's role, he added, is still being defined.

The total team will number 200 to 250 people, he said, and its size will be largely independent of whether any Iraqi weapons are uncovered. That, the senior official said, is because the infrastructure of storage, security and destruction has to be readied no matter what.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/25/international/worldspecial/25WEAP.html>

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Chicago Tribune
April 24, 2003

North Korean Scientists Reportedly Smuggled Into U.S.

By Uli Schmetzer, Special to the Tribune

MELBOURNE, Australia -- A network of private mercenaries smuggled North Korean technocrats and scientists to the United States and other Western nations to glean from them the progress of Pyongyang's nuclear program, according to published reports.

The Weekend Australian said some defectors had been smuggled through various embassies in China. The paper said these defectors provided "crucial information" about North Korea's nuclear program.

One defector reportedly was Kyong Won Ha, believed to be the father of North Korea's nuclear program.

South Korea's daily Joong Ang, quoting a senior North Korean official, this week said Kyong defected last year together with 20 other technocrats and soldiers. He and some of those senior technocrats who escaped separately are now believed to be in a safe house near Washington.

But the same North Korean official said Kyong was not a key figure in his country's nuclear program.

"He has no hard-core information," the North Korean official was quoted as saying.

The North Koreans apparently discovered Kyong had vanished late last year. An American citizen of Asian origin allegedly helped him escape from North Korea into China. From China he was taken to the U.S. via a third country, the South Korean daily said.

Senior government officials in New Zealand and Spain, two of the countries whose nationals supposedly participated in "Operation Weasel," denied any knowledge of the defections, first reported by the Weekend Australian.

U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said: "I am afraid I can't comment on individuals who may or may not have defected. So I can't go into the issue of North Koreans who may have left North Korea."

U.S. anxious for details

For the U.S. and its allies the information provided by defectors is vital to piecing together what is happening behind the world's last iron curtain. The U.S. is particularly anxious to find out more about North Korea's nuclear program and the production of sophisticated long-range missiles.

Informed sources in Australia said the U.S. is prepared to pay a high price for North Korean defectors able to shed light on Pyongyang's military industry.

The U.S., North Korea and China opened multilateral talks in Beijing on Wednesday, a diplomatic advance in efforts to curb Pyongyang's nuclear program and its sale of missiles to "rogue" nations and terrorist networks. The Bush administration has repeatedly emphasized that it believes diplomacy rather than military intervention can defuse the volatile situation on the Korean Peninsula.

The Weekend Australian, citing "confidential documents and interviews with key players in Washington, the Pacific and North Asia," said Operation Weasel had initially intended to use the tiny Pacific Island nation of Nauru as cover.

It quoted a letter from a Washington lawyer, Philip Gagner, to Nauru's president. The letter asked the Nauru government for assistance in "a diplomatic matter of very great sensitivity which involves a country -- not Iraq -- which may have acquired weapons of primary concern to other governments."

The letter, sent last October, promised that for Nauru's help the government of the United States "would likely recommend removing Nauru from the [Financial Action Task Force] list of non-cooperative countries."

Nauru cited in operations

Last December the U.S. Treasury cited Nauru for aiding money-laundering operations, possibly by terrorist networks, through Nauru's offshore banking system.

The cash-strapped island also sold passports to people allegedly wanted for terrorism. According to the Weekend Australian, Nauru officials were told the U.S. would finance the opening of Nauruan missions in Beijing and Washington. The Nauru connection was never used however.

"We were going to get a North Korean nuclear scientist and his family from a farm in China and then take them in a Nauru consulate car to an embassy," the Weekend Australian quoted former Nauru Finance Minister Kinza Clodumar.

It is believed the scientist was Kyong. But the plan was abandoned, and Kyong is believed to have taken another route out of China.

Over the years thousands of North Korean refugees have crossed the border into China in search of a livelihood or to escape to South Korea and Western countries. China has often stopped refugees by force from entering embassies. Chinese authorities have returned defectors to North Korea, where they face harsh sentences or execution.

The Weekend Australian said Operation Weasel had ended. It said Australia had not participated in the operation carried out by non-government agents of the U.S., New Zealand, Spain, Thailand, Vanuatu and the Philippines.

The office of New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark this week denied any knowledge or participation in such an operation, and Australia's foreign minister, Alexander Downer, said he would have been "briefed about defections by senior North Korean scientists."

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0304240287apr24,1,1844110.story>

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San Jose Mercury News

April 23, 2003

Nuclear 'Bunker Busters' Sought

Move signals big shift in U.S. weapon strategy

By Dan Stober, Mercury News

Demonstrating a significant shift in America's nuclear strategy, the Bush administration intends to produce -- not just research -- a thermonuclear bunker-busting bomb to destroy hardened, deeply buried targets, the Pentagon has acknowledged for the first time.

The weapon -- known as the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator -- would be a full-power hydrogen bomb that would throw up enormous clouds of radioactive dust while wreaking large-scale damage and death if used in an urban area. It would be thousands of times more powerful than the conventional "bunker busters" dropped on Baghdad in an attempt to kill former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

Federal officials signed documents in Washington this week to launch a preliminary design contest between Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Because of the lead time needed for congressional funding, officials at the National Nuclear Security Administration say, they might seek additional money for the next phase of development even before the preliminary work is completed in 2005 or 2006.

Arms-control advocates are disturbed by earth-penetrating nuclear weapons, saying they are unneeded and will only encourage other countries, such as North Korea or Iran, to build their own nuclear weapons as fast as possible. They say such weapons are unnecessary because buried bunkers can be destroyed with conventional bombs or by sending in troops to attack entrances, air shafts and communications cables.

Clear objective

But Fred Celec, the deputy assistant to the secretary of defense for nuclear matters, made clear that the administration wants the weapon and is moving forward.

If a hydrogen bomb can be successfully designed to survive a crash through hard rock or concrete and still explode, "It will ultimately get fielded," Celec said in an interview with the Mercury News. The United States has worked on nuclear earth penetrators for decades, and scientists involved in the project say they expect to succeed.

The project is integral to the administration's push to move away from Cold War "city scraping" ballistic missile warheads to battlefield "tactical" weapons.

"This administration is very serious about rethinking the entire thing," said a physicist at a U.S. nuclear weapons lab. "I think everyone around here is really encouraged to look at what the actual role is for nuclear weapons."

According to a variety of participants, impetus for a renewed interest in battlefield nuclear weapons comes primarily from civilian Pentagon officials such as Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his second-in-command, Paul Wolfowitz, rather than uniformed generals and admirals.

"I've talked to the military extensively, and I don't know anybody in the military who thinks they need a nuclear weapon to accomplish this," said U.S. Rep. Ellen Tauscher, a Walnut Creek Democrat whose district includes Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

"If you can find somebody in a uniform in the Defense Department who can talk about a new need" for nuclear bunker busters "without laughing, I'll buy him a cup of coffee," said Robert Peurifoy, a retired vice president of Sandia National Laboratory. The New Mexico lab fashions the outer casings and other non-nuclear aspects of nuclear weapons and will play a role in the project.

Celec, the Pentagon official, disagreed. Nuclear bunker busters "are being pushed by the Pentagon, and that is both military and civilian," he said.

Possible targets

Celec wouldn't discuss targets for the weapon, but seven countries -- China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria -- reportedly were listed as possible targets of U.S. weapons in the classified Nuclear Posture Review, a 2001 Pentagon document describing Bush administration policy.

The design contest between Livermore and Los Alamos is expected to last two to three years and cost about \$15 million per year. The winning lab will then shift to an engineering phase, a move that would require congressional approval and funding.

The U.S. arsenal already contains a nuclear bunker-buster -- known as the B61-11 -- but it was built to penetrate only soil. "It will not survive rock," Celec said.

A nuclear penetrator is built in the shape of a thin cylinder with a pointed nose. Dropped from an airplane, its weight and speed allow it to smash through the surface of the ground or puncture rock or concrete. It buries itself 20 to 30 feet deep before exploding, Celec said. The power of the explosion "couples" with the earth to send shock waves down toward buried targets.

The shock waves from a penetrator loaded with conventional high explosives "would probably struggle to destroy a target 100 feet deep," Celec said. But a nuclear weapon could reach much deeper.

Both sides of the bunker-buster debate agree that intelligence -- knowing where the bunkers are -- is vital, as has been demonstrated by the difficulty encountered by the CIA and military in finding Saddam.

Deep targets with imprecise coordinates would require a larger nuclear explosion, Celec said. "You're going to have to match the target with the weapon with the intelligence you've got on it."

Some skeptical military officers say they do not want to send their soldiers into a radioactive environment that may also contain biological or chemical agents scattered by the bomb. Moreover, once a nuclear weapon has been used,

the enemy may retaliate with any weapons of mass destruction it still possesses, said a Marine colonel who asked not to be identified.

``It's out there, and it's too late to take it back," he said.

Changing needs

In several policy documents, the Pentagon has called for a ``responsive" nuclear force to meet changing situations. Foreign leaders who are not deterred by the current U.S. nuclear weapons -- because they do not believe President Bush will use them -- might be deterred by a nuclear bunker-buster specifically designed to put them personally at risk in their underground quarters.

``The other guy has to think you're capable of using it," Celec said.

The earth-penetrator program is also motivated by a policy of providing the scientists at nuclear labs with challenging problems that lead to a finished product. A decade after the end of U.S. nuclear testing, there is fear in some quarters that scientists may become bored and find jobs elsewhere.

Peurifoy, the retired Sandia official, opposes the drive for more nuclear weapons. ``It's outlandish. It's stupid," he said from his home in Texas. ``It is an effort to maintain a payroll" at the weapons labs.

The laboratories in Livermore and Los Alamos each have an existing hydrogen bomb they are proposing to modify to become the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator. Livermore will work with a bomb known as the B83. Los Alamos will modify the B61, the bomb that now serves as the U.S. nuclear bunker buster.

<http://www.bayarea.com/mld/mercurynews/news/5695904.htm>

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New York Times

April 25, 2003

Russia: Destroying Chemical Weapons

Zinovy Pak, the departing supervisor of Russia's chemical weapons destruction program, said Moscow had beaten an initial deadline for dismantling the stock but more problems loomed ahead. Russia inherited from the Soviet Union 40,000 tons of nerve gas and other toxic agents, said to be the world's largest chemical weapons stockpile. Cash shortages plagued destruction efforts, but recently Western countries have promised large sums, prompted by worries that weapons could be used by militant groups. The program's first stage, formally scheduled to be completed on April 29, involved only 1 percent of the stock.

--Reuters

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/04/25/international/europe/25BRIE1.html>

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