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New York Times
August 1, 2003
Pg. 1

North Korea Seen As Ready To Agree To Wider Meetings

By Steven R. Weisman

WASHINGTON, July 31 — The Bush administration said today that North Korea appeared ready to agree to proposed multiparty talks to resolve the impasse over the North's refusal to dismantle its accelerating nuclear weapons program.

Administration officials and Asian diplomats said that while no formal word had been received in Washington, there were several indications that months of pressure had been successful in getting North Korea to meet the American demand for talks to include South Korea, Japan and possibly Russia. China took part in discussions with the United States and the North in April.

Foremost among the new indications was an announcement from the Foreign Ministry in Moscow that North Korea had accepted the proposal for multiparty talks with the other countries, including Russia. It had not been clear until then that Russia would take part.

Subsequently, administration officials said that in a telephone conversation on Wednesday, President Hu Jintao of China had told President Bush he expected a positive response from Pyongyang, the North Korea capital.

Richard A. Boucher, the State Department spokesman, said the United States was "very encouraged" by these signs, but he and other officials said there had been no formal acceptance transmitted. Asian and American diplomats said that the talks could occur in August but that September was more likely.

The issue of who should take part in such talks, while seemingly obscure, has been contentious throughout the latest crisis over North Korea, which began last October when it admitted that it had violated a promise not to produce nuclear weapons.

North Korea has said that its main security threat comes from the United States, and that it would negotiate only with Washington. It also said it would reach a deal to end its nuclear weapons program only in return for infusions of aid and American guarantees that it will not be attacked.

The Bush administration has refused to exclude Japan and South Korea from any negotiation, in part because their publics would not tolerate a deal arranged without them and also because Washington feels any possible deal is more enforceable if more nations take part.

"The more people are involved, the more chances of a deal that will be respected," a senior administration official said. "That's the reason we have not gone along with bilateral talks. It's much better if North Korea negotiates with people on whom it depends for help."

The new development on the talks was seen as significant but far short of anything indicating an imminent breakthrough on substance. Among other things, the administration is still divided over how much of a concession to make to North Korea's demand for a nonaggression guarantee in return for an agreement to dismantle the nuclear program.

Many hard-liners in the administration openly question whether any promise by North Korea is worth accepting, on the grounds that it cannot be trusted, especially since it agreed to end its nuclear program in 1994 and then renounced that agreement last year. That occurred after the United States confronted the North with incriminating evidence that it had secretly restarted the program.

Some administration hard-liners say they would prefer to put pressure on North Korea economically, politically and perhaps militarily in hopes that the government would collapse. But they say they also support the negotiation approach, in part because they think the talks will fail and provide a stronger reason for raising pressure.

American officials said that in an effort to let North Korea save face, Washington had originally sent word that it would be willing to accept the idea of talks with China, North Korea and the United States, in an initial phase, as long as they were followed by five- or six-way talks, as demanded by the United States.

But officials said today that the word from China and others, including some nongovernment emissaries who had been in touch with North Korea, was that the North was willing to forgo the initial phase.

Although Mr. Bush has brought Russia, China, South Korea and Japan into the process, it is not clear what each party would be willing to accept as a final settlement.

North Korea's basic demand for a nonaggression guarantee from the United States has been rejected by Washington. American officials say they would be willing to consider making a statement to that effect as part of an accord, but the idea of a treaty was ruled out this week by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell.

A senior administration official, speaking anonymously, was more blunt. "Nonaggression agreements went out with the 1920's," he said.

A separate part of any agreement with North Korea would address its demand for vast amounts of energy, food and economic assistance. Administration officials say such aid can be forthcoming only after it is clear that the North had dismantled its nuclear program irreversibly.

As for how the impasse over the talks appeared to have been overcome, administration officials and Asian diplomats said China had played a crucial role. They said that in October at Mr. Bush's ranch in Crawford, Tex., the president told Jiang Zemin, then China's president, that improved Chinese-American relations hinged on China's help with North Korea, whose nuclear arms program had just been confirmed.

An Asian diplomat said that at first China did not take North Korea's nuclear threat seriously but that intelligence evidence had convinced Mr. Jiang and his successor, Mr. Hu, that a North Korean nuclear program could lead to nuclear weapons proliferation in South Korea, Japan and perhaps Taiwan.

At the same time, this diplomat said, China feared that the Bush administration's hard-liners would gain advantage in determining policy, possibly provoking a military conflict in the region.

The United States has persuaded a dozen nations to declare their willingness to interdict missile exports by North Korea. Some Asian diplomats worry that such steps might be provocative to the North.

The United States did not ever make clear whether Russia would take part in the talks with North Korea, but Moscow appears to have seized on the opportunity to do so, perhaps to keep its influence in the region. An Asian diplomat said the North might have, in like fashion, seized on the idea of having Russia take part in order to bring a potentially friendlier nation to the talks.

As if to reinforce the influence of administration hard-liners, one of their camp's members, John R. Bolton, the under secretary of state for arms control, delivered a stern denunciation of Kim Jong Il, the North Korean leader, in a speech today in Seoul, South Korea.

"Kim Jong Il seems to care more about enriching uranium than enriching his own people," he said. "While he lives like royalty in Pyongyang, he keeps hundreds of thousands of his people locked in prison camps with millions more mired in abject poverty, scrounging the ground for food. For many in North Korea, life is a hellish nightmare."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/01/international/asia/01KORE.html>

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USA Today
August 1, 2003
Pg. 1

U.S. Probes New Leads On Weapons

CIA adviser says Iraqi scientists cooperating

By John Diamond, USA Today

WASHINGTON — Iraqi scientists and documents from Saddam Hussein's regime are leading investigators to new sites suspected of being part of Iraq's alleged program to produce banned weapons, the CIA's special adviser on the weapons search said Thursday.

Adviser David Kay said no chemical or biological weapons have been found in six weeks of intensive searching, and details of the new findings will remain classified until U.S. intelligence concludes they amount to an irrefutable case that can be presented to the public.

Even so, he said the probe has discovered evidence of Iraqi efforts to hide its weapons programs from international inspectors — evidence being provided by the Iraqi officials who were in charge of concealing those programs.

"We are, as we speak, involved in sensitive exploitation of sites that we are being led to by Iraqis," Kay told reporters after a closed briefing with members of Congress. "We have Iraqi scientists who were involved in these programs who are assisting us in taking them apart. They are cooperating."

Kay's closed-door testimony is the latest and most comprehensive indication yet of how the search is going for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Such weapons were one reason President Bush gave for a war in Iraq.

Few of the sites being investigated were known to U.S. intelligence before the war, said Kay, who's a former chief weapons inspector for the United Nations.

The secrecy surrounding his initial findings stem in part from political pressure on the president to prove the charges he leveled against Iraq to justify the U.S.-led invasion. The White House, stung by criticism for including discredited information in a State of the Union address about Iraq's attempts to buy uranium, is taking no chances. The administration has ordered Kay to withhold information until he can present a solid case and, "placate the critics and cynics," as Bush put it Wednesday.

Evidence of Iraq's weapons efforts must be supported by testimony from multiple Iraqis, multiple documents that describe the weapons program and physical evidence associated with the weapons program.

"It is not something that is easy to unwrap," Kay said.

"The active deception program is truly amazing once you get inside it," Kay said. "We have people who participated in deceiving U.N. inspectors now telling us how they did it."

The CIA's adviser did not say what was being concealed.

Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., vice chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said he was "hopeful" that the U.S.-led search for Iraqi weapons would succeed. But he emphasized that the administration must find the weapons themselves, not just evidence of a program. "I want to see this validated in the sense that we went to war for the right reasons, and that would be weapons of mass destruction," he said.

<http://www.usatoday.com/usatoday/20030801/5374184s.htm>

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US Strategy: Isolate Kim Jong Il

In Seoul, a Bush official takes a hard line on N. Korea's leader amid a multinational effort to push negotiations.

By Robert Marquand, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

SEOUL – Ten months into a nuclear standoff with North Korea that has consumed the energies of Northeast Asia, influential US hawks in the Bush administration feel the time is ripe to focus steadily on Kim Jong Il, leader of the isolated North, as Asia's main antagonist.

Ironically, the strategy of isolating Mr. Kim as the principal culprit comes amid a multinational effort to get that same Kim to the negotiating table.

Thursday, in a hard-hitting speech, John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control, said Kim has rejected "olive branch after olive branch" while turning his country into a "hellish nightmare."

A broad range of Asia hands, in fact, feel a recent series of tactical mistakes by Kim, including his recent threats to test nuclear devices, is exposing the Dear Leader more clearly as a liability to his neighbors, China, South Korea, and Russia.

The strategy pursued by Bolton: Separate Kim as "dictator" from the people of the North as "victims" - and promote a discourse in Asia that holds Kim responsible for regional instability, and for creating massive prison-labor camps, the poverty of his country, and for ongoing efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

In short, the implicit message from Bush hard-liners is, as one administration official says, "We still believe in 'regime change,' and we want that understood as part of the push to get Kim to see the light."

Bolton is a close ally in White House political circles of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Assistant Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, and Vice President Dick Cheney - influential skeptics of negotiations with Kim Jong Il.

President Bush has so far backed multilateral talks overseen by Secretary of State Colin Powell. Mr. Bush Wednesday phoned President Hu Jintao of China, a lead player in talks, expressing support for a diplomatic process that has been extremely taxing.

Bolton referred to Kim Jong Il 43 times in a four-page speech, while making reference to "North Korea" only 15 times - itself a message, sources say.

"The brazenness of Kim Jong Il's behavior in the past year is striking," Bolton told an audience of the East Asia Institute in Seoul. "While nuclear blackmail used to be the province of fictional spy movies, Kim is forcing us to live that reality..."

"Action is needed," Bolton offered to a set of Korean academics and officials, many of whom favor a more flexible policy of engagement with the North.

Since 1994, the undersecretary for arms control said, "billions of dollars" have been sent to "buy off" the North. But nine years later, Kim Jong Il has "not one, but two separate nuclear weapons programs...."

He was referring to revelations last October, when the North admitted having a secret enriched-uranium program in addition to an existing plutonium program. In 1994, the Clinton administration brokered a deal in which the North agreed to stop reprocessing plutonium in exchange for the building of two light-water reactors.

Early this year, Kim ejected UN inspectors who were monitoring some 8,000 spent fuel rods used to make weapons grade plutonium - and the North has since reprocessed some or all of those rods, setting off worry in this region, and in Washington.

Washington intelligence sources say that while the North may be able to achieve numerous plutonium bombs early next spring, the more "troubling" issue is the North's heavy enriched uranium program. Plutonium traces can be detected in the air through sensors. But uranium is not detectable, and is relatively easy to hide.

Administration sources, however, denied as "not just wrong, but dead wrong," a report earlier this month by The New York Times claiming that traces of Krypton 85 have been discovered in the air above North Korea. Krypton 85 is a telltale substance, which the Times said indicated a possible second and heretofore unknown plutonium reprocessing plant in the North.

Bolton's speech comes at a time when South Koreans are deeply divided over how to regard the North. For years following the devastating Korean War, Pyongyang was regarded as a communist enemy. But in recent years, the South has pursued a "Sunshine Policy" of engagement that sought to view the North as fellow brother and sister Koreans. Current President Roh Moo-hyun was elected in December on a promise to continue that policy.

"I felt Bolton made a wise speech," says conservative Jung Hoon-lee of Yonsei University in Seoul. "There is confusion here between the North Korean people and the North Korean regime. We want to see our country as a whole, and to approach the North with sympathy. But we need to keep in mind that the biggest problem is the regime, not the people, and that gets forgotten."

Kim's isolation is being brought on partly by his own actions. The North's recent admission of reprocessing and nuclear aims have surprised many sympathizers in the South, and in China. Last fall, Kim admitted the North had kidnapped 11 Japanese in recent decades. But he did not admit kidnapping what is estimated at hundreds of South Koreans. The historic meeting between Kim and South Korean President Kim Dae Jung in 2000 earned a Nobel Prize for peace. But the emotional event has soured in the wake of evidence this spring that the South wired hundreds of millions of dollars prior to the meeting. Nor has Kim Jong Il ever fulfilled a promise, made in 2000, to visit Seoul in reciprocation.

Joon Ki-sung, a graduate from a local college in Seoul last year who hasn't found a job, attributes the bad economy in Korea to Kim's nuclear brinkmanship. "I have problems with US troops here," she says, "but I'm not a fan of Kim Jong Il, either."

Bolton has been in Asia drumming up support for an initiative to interdict drugs and nuclear-related technology coming to and from the North. He is also trying to rally support for a US plan to sanction the North through the UN Security Council, should multilateral talks fail. The North has said it will treat UN sanctions as "an act of war," and China and Russia, and to some degree South Korea, have opposed sanctions as premature.

Bolton disagrees. He characterized UN sanctions as "an alternative track" if multilateral talks in Beijing should fail. "The North should know it can't just block the Beijing track [of diplomacy]," since that would bring the alternative, Bolton said.

What effect the Bush hard-liners may have on Kim's willingness to deal, or on internal dynamics in the North, is unclear.

Some Korea specialists feel that political conditions in the North are unstable, and ripe for some form of collapse. Others say the proud military regime, one of the most tightly controlled in the world, has weathered the starvation of some 2 million of its people in the mid-1990s - with no discernable protest or attempt to overthrow the leader. They argue that Kim is dealing from a position of strength.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0801/p01s03-woap.html>

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Wall Street Journal

August 1, 2003

Pg. 1

Thai Principal Had Cesium For Sale; Police Were Buyers

Case Spotlights How Lure of Cash Brings Amateurs Into the Dirty-Bomb Market

By James Hookway, Staff Reporter Of The Wall Street Journal

BANGKOK -- Narong Penanam would seem an improbable trafficker in hazardous radioactive materials.

Mr. Narong, 44 years old, is a respected figure in his home village of Praokala near Thailand's malaria-ridden border with Cambodia. He drives a pickup truck, farms pigs and teaches school. Last year, he was promoted to run a public elementary school. But in June, Thai police arrested him in a sting operation in the parking lot of a Bangkok hotel. They alleged he was trying to sell undercover agents a radioactive substance that could be used to make a so-called dirty bomb.

Mr. Narong was the last stop for part of a batch of radioactive cesium-137 that first arrived in Thailand at least six years ago. Even though the amount he had was a fraction of an ounce and probably wasn't enough to deliver a lethal dose of radiation, it was enough to cause widespread panic in a city. The source of the cesium remains unknown, as does the precise sequence of events that delivered the substance into his hands. Mr. Narong has named an accomplice, though he isn't being sought for questioning. "The evidence isn't hard enough to arrest anybody else, but [the case] is still under investigation," says a senior Thai police official closely involved in the matter.

Spate of Incidents

The uncertainty surrounding the case underlines a worrying new trend: A spate of incidents from Nigeria to the former Soviet Union and Latin America suggests radioactive materials needed to build dirty bombs could emerge nearly anywhere. Meanwhile, many of the cases involve amateur brokers looking for easy money who can badly confuse the hunt for genuine terrorism threats. Mr. Narong isn't a citizen of a rogue state and investigators don't believe he has any ties to a terrorist organization. He was simply willing to sell his tiny package of highly volatile cesium to anybody prepared to pay his \$240,000 asking price.

Hours after Mr. Narong's arrest, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, whose department helped in the investigation, issued a statement declaring the bust "an outstanding example of international cooperation in disrupting the proliferation of radiological material."

At the time, Thai authorities said Mr. Narong was trying to sell as much as 66 pounds of cesium, enough to inflict deaths and illnesses and badly contaminate a major city, causing tens of millions of dollars in damages. It turned out

the larger estimate had included the lead-lined container that held Mr. Narong's 0.035 ounces of radioactive material. A federal law-enforcement official familiar with the investigation said U.S. authorities had been skeptical from the start about the larger figure, because the type of metal container seized is "notorious" for causing people to overestimate the amount of materials inside. Thai officials corrected the error shortly later.

Ticklish Issue

For the U.S., which can't conduct a full investigation of its own without Thai involvement, the situation highlights a ticklish and frustrating issue: Local authorities sometimes may not be aggressive enough in pursuing cases that can be politically touchy and complex. Mr. Narong is currently out on bail. If convicted of illegal possession of radiological materials, he could face up to a year in jail.

Mr. Narong doesn't deny possessing cesium. In an interview in his home province while awaiting trial, he says he was only acting as a middleman for partners he is unwilling to identify. He says his motive wasn't financial but rather to get radioactive substances to the proper authorities. "I'm a bad guy in the eyes of the world and the Thai people, but actually I'm not," Mr. Narong says.

Dirty bombs use radioactive materials such as cesium or other byproducts from nuclear reactions to spike traditional explosives. These substances are widely used in hospitals to treat cancer or in industries such as petroleum to help drillers determine whether they have detected oil or natural gas. The General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress, said in June that thousands of containers of radioactive materials that can be used to build dirty bombs are missing, particularly in the former Soviet Union. Indeed, the container carrying Mr. Narong's supply of cesium was marked with faded red Russian script.

Packing substances such as cesium around the core of a bomb doesn't make it any more explosive. The blast, however, can disperse radiological material over a wide area, setting off geiger counters and prompting widespread fears of cancer or radiation sickness. In the initial chaos, it would be hard to know how much radioactive material is actually involved. In addition to illness and death, the other fallout from a radiological attack could be economic. A dirty-bomb attack could shut a city's central business district for months for expensive decontamination. A severe attack might render the area uninhabitable.

So far, intelligence agencies are aware of only one instance in which a dirty bomb was actually detonated. Iraq exploded a test device in 1987, but the bomb didn't produce enough fallout to be an effective military weapon and the project was abandoned. Western intelligence officials say Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda organization tried - and failed -- to build a dirty bomb in Sudan in the late 1990s. Last year, U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft accused former Chicago gang member Abdullah al-Muhajir of allegedly planning a dirty-bomb attack in the U.S. on behalf of al Qaeda. Mr. Muhajir, who was born José Padilla, denies the charge.

Today, officials are concerned that loosely guarded radiological materials are increasingly popping up in unexpected places, such as Bangkok hotel parking lots. Specialists who track the accelerating proliferation of radiological materials say criminal groups are beginning to recognize how lucrative the underground nuclear trade could be.

"They are in it for the money, leveraging off the perceived notoriety of these substances," says Dr. Charles Ferguson, scientist-in-residence at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute for International Studies in California.

In December, for instance, Houston-based oil-services and construction firm Halliburton Co. reported that a radiological instrument used to measure the depth of oil wells was stolen from its compound in Nigeria. Despite an extensive investigation, the radiological materials -- in this case enough americium-241 to contaminate several city blocks -- haven't been found. Halliburton didn't respond to repeated requests seeking comment.

In the former Soviet republic of Georgia, police stopped a taxi on May 31 for a routine search near the Tblisi railway station. Inside, police said, they found a box of cesium-137 and a box of strontium-90, as well as a batch of the nerve agent mustard gas. Police said at the time they suspected the materials were being smuggled to middlemen in Turkey.

In the Philippines, investigators are looking into a case in which a businessman was allegedly trying to dupe local terrorist groups into buying fake nuclear materials.

Thai police say this is exactly what Mr. Narong was trying to do -- except he had a small sample of a genuine radioactive material to use as bait. U.S. customs agents last October heard through their intelligence network that somebody in Thailand was trying to sell uranium. They later discovered that it was cesium.

The tip triggered alarm bells in Washington. Bangkok was already firmly established on the international terrorist map. Ramzi Yousef, convicted for the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, plotted to bomb the U.S. Embassy in the Thai capital in 1994 before his arrest the following year. Members of al Qaeda affiliate Jemaah Islamiyah, meanwhile, held some meetings in Bangkok to plan last year's attack on the Indonesian island of Bali, which killed 202 people.

American officials contacted the Royal Thai Police, who sent out undercover agents to discover who was trying to sell radioactive materials. Guided by U.S. intelligence, their trail led to Mr. Narong, who was willing to sell a

quantity of what he claimed to be uranium for \$240,000. According to police, Mr. Narong told an undercover agent that if the buyer was prepared to pay in advance, he could provide more uranium from two stashes secreted across the border in Laos.

Thai police don't believe there are any radioactive materials hidden in the jungles of Laos, saying they believe the claim was part of Mr. Narong's scam. Nor do Thai or U.S. intelligence officials think Mr. Narong had made contact with Jemaah Islamiyah or any other dangerous group. "We don't believe this is about terrorism; it's about somebody trying to make a lot of money very quickly," says Maj. Gen. Surasit Sangkhaong, commander of the Royal Thai Police's Crime Suppression Division.

Mr. Narong, a Buddhist, doesn't fit the profile of a terrorist. A stout man who is fond of checkered shirts, he comes from a moderately prosperous family in Surin province, near Thailand's eastern border with Cambodia. The land is flat and sparse, largely given over to rice cultivation.

Mr. Narong's father was a schoolteacher and farmer, and Mr. Narong followed his father's example, local residents say, becoming headmaster of the Non Tal Namtaeng elementary school last year. "We were all shocked when we heard he had been arrested," says Inspector Todsaphol Luekla, a local policeman and childhood friend. "I knew Narong was a little bored with his life, but I didn't think he would do anything like this," adds Sergeant Wichai Yaiburi.

The trail to Mr. Narong's arrest began in 2001, with the death of a man he never knew: a Thai air-force officer, Air Vice Marshal Chanak Charoensuk. Four years earlier, in 1997, according to Mr. Chanak's widow and officials at Thailand's Office of Atomic Energy for Peace, the air-force officer somehow took possession of a suspicious substance in a heavy, lead-lined container labeled with Russian lettering. He took the box to the atomic agency's laboratory where tests revealed that it contained cesium-137.

For reasons that remain unclear, Mr. Chanak then took the box to his house in Bangkok, where it lay undisturbed until his death. Mr. Narong says an old friend of his, an aide to the officer, discovered the mysterious box.

After a few months, a portion of the cesium was returned to the atomic agency accompanied by an anonymous letter stating that it was the full amount of cesium held by Mr. Chanak. "But it wasn't the complete amount," says Sutad Thienstrong, director of the waste-disposal division at Thailand's atomic energy agency.

Mr. Narong says that in May he drove to Bangkok to collect the radioactive material from his friend, the aide to Mr. Chanak.

Investigators say Mr. Narong told them he set out to find a buyer for what he believed to be a batch of uranium. U.S. authorities say Mr. Narong went about that task a little too noisily. Through their intelligence network, U.S. customs agents got wind of Mr. Narong's intentions and alerted Thai police, who then set about creating an elaborate trap to snare the schoolteacher.

Thai agents from the Crime Suppression Division disguised themselves as interested buyers and held more than a dozen meetings with Mr. Narong over several months. Each conversation was recorded, officials say. Some of the Thai officers in the investigation believed Mr. Narong was working a confidence game and that he didn't have any radioactive material.

When they finally persuaded him to hand over a sample of his wares on June 6, one field officer said he was shocked that Mr. Narong really did have cesium. On June 13, Thai police agents set up a noon meeting with Mr. Narong in the car park of the Royal Pacific Hotel in Bangkok. They agreed to pay the schoolteacher's asking price of \$240,000. As they were about to hand the money over, Mr. Narong was detained.

--Sasi-on Kam-on and Gary Fields contributed to this article.

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New York Times
August 1, 2003

Leader Of Iraqi Arms Search Gives Senators A Confident But Cautious Report

By James Risén

WASHINGTON, July 31 — The administration's new chief weapons hunter, who gave closed-door briefings to two Senate committees today, said afterward that teams searching for evidence of illegal weapons in Iraq were making "solid progress," but he also counseled patience.

"It is going to take time," David Kay, the chief strategist in the Iraqi weapons hunt, told reporters today after addressing the Senate Armed Services and the Senate Intelligence Committees. "The Iraqis had over two decades to develop these weapons. And hiding them was an essential part of their program. So it's not an easy task, and we're not close to a final conclusion yet."

His conservative statements seem to fit in with a new and more cautious approach by the Bush administration in the continuing debate over Iraq's weapons. After trumpeting some initial discoveries, only to find the evidence later discredited or called into question, administration officials have more recently been arguing that it will take time to uncover Saddam Hussein's well-hidden weapons programs.

After facing criticism for its early failures to find any conclusive evidence of weapons, the administration has turned to Mr. Kay, a former United Nations weapons inspector, to take control of the process and launch a more sophisticated and thorough search. And Mr. Kay is clearly wary of losing credibility by publicly discussing evidence before he is certain of its authenticity.

"We do not intend to expose this evidence until we have full confidence that it is solid proof," he said.

Despite his caution, however, Mr. Kay did say that tantalizing finds might be just around the corner. "The American people should not be surprised by surprises," he said. "We are determined to take this apart and every day, I must say, we're surprised by new advances that we're making."

Initially, the military was given the task of scouring sites throughout the Iraq. In the first few weeks after the war, the search seemed to be a low priority for the military, and only small teams with limited resources were assigned to go through hundreds of suspicious sites.

Mr. Kay's appointment in June by George J. Tenet the director of central intelligence, was one of the first concrete signs of President Bush's dissatisfaction with the way in which the search for Iraq's weapons programs had been handled by the Pentagon.

With little support from top management in the military or the Pentagon, the teams made no real progress, and interagency feuds and disputes among various military units plagued the search.

The search seemed to be such a low priority that it raised questions about whether the administration really believed that finding evidence of weapons was necessary to justify the decision to go to war.

But as the weeks went by without any discovery of conclusive evidence of weapons, the failure to find them became a major political issue in both Washington and London. Mr. Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair began to face accusations that they had exaggerated the threat posed by Mr. Hussein before the war.

Mr. Bush turned to Mr. Tenet to take charge of the search after he discovered that neither military commanders nor the American civilian leadership in Iraq seemed to be in charge of coordinating the weapons hunt. Mr. Tenet then assigned Mr. Kay to be his principal adviser and chief strategist in the weapons search, working with the Iraq Survey Group, a 1,500-member team created to replace the smaller units that conducted the initial hunt.

Mr. Kay does not have direct command over the military forces in the Iraq Survey Group, but he is clearly now the man in charge of coordinating the hunt.

The Army officer who heads the Iraq Survey Group, Maj. Gen. Keith Dayton, also testified today.

Mr. Kay, who led three arms inspection missions as the United Nation's chief nuclear weapons inspector in Iraq after the Persian Gulf war of 1991, reports directly to Mr. Tenet, giving the C.I.A. the lead role in the hunt.

The fact that a former United Nations weapons expert is now running the American search follows a prewar period in which the Bush administration dismissed the United Nations inspection process and said it lacked the ability to discover the truth about Iraq's weapons programs.

Mr. Kay's upbeat assessment today clearly aided the White House, and provided relief to Republican lawmakers on Capitol Hill who have been standing by the administration as it has faced mounting questions about the failure to find the weapons.

He said search teams were obtaining new leads that were helping to provide a much better understanding of the status of Iraq's programs before the war.

"We are actively exploring sites based on leads from document exploitation and Iraqis who are collaborating with us," he said.

He added that the hunt was not focused only on sites identified before the war, but also on new ones identified by Iraqis who were starting to cooperate. "We are being led to these sites by Iraqis and documentation from the Saddam Hussein regime," he said. "It's the best type of site exploitation I know that you can conduct."

He also denied reports that Iraqi weapons scientists detained by American forces were not helping in the search.

"We have Iraqi scientists who were involved in these programs who are assisting us in taking them apart," he said.

"They are collaborating and cooperating."

Those scientists are "giving us information which we are then checking against our other two standards, documents and physical evidence."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/01/international/worldspecial/01WEAP.html>

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A Dictatorship At The Crossroads

By John R. Bolton

The brazenness of Kim Jong Il's behavior in the past year is striking. While nuclear blackmail used to be the province of fictional spy movies, Kim Jong Il is forcing us to live that reality as we enter the new millennium. To give in to his extortionist demands would only encourage him, and perhaps more ominously, other would-be tyrants around the world. One needs little reminding that we have tested Kim Jong Il's intentions many times before -- a test he has consistently failed. Since 1994, billions of dollars in economic and energy assistance have flowed into the coffers of Pyongyang to buy off their nuclear weapons program. Nine years later, Kim Jong Il has repaid us by threatening the world with not one, but two separate nuclear weapons programs -- one based on plutonium, the other highly-enriched uranium.

If history is any guide, Kim Jong Il probably expects that his current threats will result in newfound legitimacy and billions of dollars of economic and energy assistance pouring into his failed economy. In this case, however, history is not an especially good guide -- a page has been turned. Particularly after Sept. 11, the world is acutely aware of the danger posed to civilian populations by weapons of mass destruction being developed by tyrannical rogue state leaders like Kim Jong Il or falling into the hands of terrorists.

In 1994, North Korea could have chosen to enter the international community on a new and different footing. While communist dictatorships were collapsing or reforming across the globe, there was even hope that Kim Il Sung's North Korea would follow suit. When power passed to Kim Jong Il, the world hoped he would be more enlightened and recognize the benefits of participating in the global community -- as opposed to threatening and blackmailing it. Unfortunately, this still has not come to pass. Even a cursory glance of the first decade of Kim Jong Il's dictatorial reign suggests that he has done nothing but squander opportunity after opportunity, olive branch after olive branch. Kim Jong Il, of course, has not had to endure the consequences of his failed policies. While he lives like royalty in Pyongyang, he keeps hundreds of thousands of his people locked in prison camps with millions more mired in abject poverty, scrounging the ground for food. For many in North Korea, life is a hellish nightmare. As reported by the U.S. State Department report on human rights, it is believed that some 400,000 persons died in prison since 1972 and that starvation and executions were common. Entire families, including children, were imprisoned when only one member of the family was accused of a crime.

There is still hope that Kim Jong Il may change course. All civilized nations and peace-loving people hope this to be true. But Kim Jong Il must make the personal decision to do so and choose a different path.

The United States seeks a peaceful solution to this situation. U.S. President George W. Bush has unambiguously led the way in mobilizing world public opinion to support finding a lasting multilateral solution to a problem that threatens the security of the entire world. The operative term is "multilateral." It would be the height of irresponsibility for the Bush administration to enter into another bilateral agreement with the Kim Jong Il dictatorship. The Clinton administration bravely tried with the Agreed Framework but failed because Kim Jong Il instructed his subordinates to systematically violate it in secret. To enter into a similar type of agreement again would simply postpone the problem for some future administration -- something the Bush administration will not do. Postponing the elimination of Kim Jong Il's nuclear weapons program will only allow him time to amass even more nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and to develop even longer range missiles. Any doubts that Kim Jong Il would peddle nuclear materials or nuclear weapons to any buyer on the international market were dispelled last April when his envoy threatened to do just that.

This will not stand. Some have speculated that the U.S. is resigned to nuclear weapons on the peninsula and will simply have to learn to live with nuclear weapons in the hands of a tyrannical dictator who has threatened to export them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

This is why the U.S. is working so hard on pursuing the multilateral track in Beijing. This track is alive and well, but the ball is in North Korea's court. The key now is to get South Korea and Japan, and ultimately Russia and others, a seat at the table. As crucial players in the region, and the countries most threatened by Kim Jong Il, the roles of Seoul and Tokyo are vital to finding any permanent solution. Those with a direct stake in the outcome must be part of the process.

While the Beijing track is on course, prudence suggests that the U.S. pursue other tracks as well. We seek a peaceful solution to resolve the threat posed by Kim Jong Il, but all options are on the table. There are two complementary tracks that we are pursuing now.

The first is action through the United Nations Security Council. As the U.N. body charged with protecting international peace and security, it could play an important role in helping to reach a peaceful settlement.

Unfortunately, the council is not playing the part it should. It was six months ago that the Board of Governors of the

International Atomic Energy Agency voted overwhelmingly to report North Korea's violations to the Security Council.

To date, virtually nothing has happened. Appropriate and timely action by the Security Council would complement efforts on the multilateral track in Beijing. Just as important, it would send a signal to the rest of the world that the council takes its responsibilities seriously. When North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty the first time in March 1993, the council took action within a month. Ignoring this issue will not make it go away -- it will only reduce confidence in the council and suggest to proliferators that they can sell their deadly arsenals with impunity.

The other track is the Proliferation Security Initiative, or PSI. The last year has seen Kim Jong Il accelerate his WMD programs, particularly on the nuclear front. Brazenly threatening to demonstrate, even export, nuclear weapons, Kim Jong Il and his supporters have defied the unanimous will of the international community. If Pyongyang thought the international community would simply ignore its threats -- it was mistaken. The second meeting of the PSI, recently held in Brisbane, Australia, "agreed to move quickly on direct, practical measures to impede the trafficking in weapons of mass destruction, missiles and related items." Specifically, on "defining actions necessary to collectively or individually interdict shipments of WMD or missiles and related items at sea, in the air or on land."

Just as the South Korean Ministry of National Defense recently defined North Korea as the "main enemy," the nations participating in the PSI put North Korea and Iran at the top of the list of proliferant countries. That North Korea has earned this dubious distinction should come as little surprise in light of Pyongyang's trafficking in death and destruction to keep Kim Jong Il in power. It is practically their only source of hard currency earnings, unless of course you add narcotics and other illegal activities.

Already, operational training exercises on interdiction utilizing both military and civilian assets are being planned. Kim Jong Il would be wise to consider diversifying his export base to something besides weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. The international community's tolerance for actions that defy global norms is fast shrinking. There is growing political will to take concrete steps to prevent dictators such as Kim Jong Il from profiting in ill-gotten gains.

This choice is Kim Jong Il's and his alone. In coordination with its allies, the U.S. is prepared to welcome a reformed North Korea into the world of civilized nations. This would mean, however, that Kim Jong Il makes the political decision to undergo sweeping reforms. A good start would be to respect the human rights of his people and not starve them to death or put them in death camps.

It would also mean respecting international norms and abiding by international commitments and giving up their extensive chemical and biological weapons programs. And it will certainly require Kim Jong Il to dismantle his nuclear weapons program -- completely, verifiably, and irreversibly.

The days of DPRK blackmail are over. Kim Jong Il has already squandered the first decade of his rule. To continue down the path toward nuclear weapons will squander his legacy as well. The choice is his to make -- but whichever path he does choose -- the United States and its allies are prepared. Let us hope he makes the right choice.

Mr. Bolton is the U.S. undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. This is an edited extract of his speech to the East Asia Institute in Seoul yesterday.

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Omaha World-Herald
July 31, 2003

Big Guns Will Discuss Nuke Policy, New Threats

By Jake Thompson, World-Herald Bureau

WASHINGTON - A meeting involving 150 experts next week at Offutt Air Force Base will be the most significant examination of America's nuclear weapons capabilities since a similar event was held at Offutt in 1995, a Defense Department spokesman said Wednesday.

Maj. Michael Shavers said the Aug. 7 meeting hosted by the Strategic Command will be "fairly broad and wide-ranging," but he declined to say directly whether the topic of mini-nuclear weapons will be on the table.

Mini-nukes could be used to destroy targets such as reinforced bunkers holding chemical or biological weapons with less damage to surrounding areas, administration officials and government scientists have said.

The meeting, he said, will examine the nation's nuclear weapons systems and the role they should play in the future to serve as a nuclear deterrent to potential adversaries.

A former national security analyst on Capitol Hill called the meeting a responsible response to new threats that confront the United States, particularly worthy in light of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"We have an arsenal that was to deter the Soviet Union. Now we need to figure out who we need to deter and what you need to do that," said Celeste Ward Johnson, now a fellow at the Center for Strategic Studies think tank. "The Cold War has been over now a long time, yet our forces still reflect a Cold War mission."

A focus of the StratCom conference will be what is called the Stockpile Stewardship Program, a system adopted in the 1990s to use nonnuclear experiments, computer modeling and other measures to check the viability of the nation's nuclear weapons without actual testing.

The last nuclear tests by the United States were done more than a decade ago.

In the Moscow Treaty signed by President Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2002, the United States committed to reducing its nuclear weapons stockpile by 2012.

With increased reliance on a smaller number of nukes and a new focus on their offensive and defensive uses, the conference aims to take stock of the stewardship program's ability to ensure safe and reliable nuclear weapons as a deterrent to attack, Shavers said.

Lawrence Korb, a former Reagan administration defense official now at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, said the meeting is "very important" given a big debate in Congress and within the Bush administration about the role of America's aging nuclear arsenal and whether to develop a new generation of mini-nukes.

The mini-nukes debate is particularly dicey, Korb said, because the United States has held a moral high ground by not setting off nuclear tests. Other nations such as India and Pakistan have earned sharp criticism from the world community for testing nuclear weapons.

If the United States seeks to build a new generation of weapons, that could lead to new tests.

"If you test again on developing new nuclear weapons, there goes the whole nonproliferation effort," Korb said.

Among those attending the Offutt meeting, Shavers said, will be officials from the Defense Department, the Department of Energy, StratCom, senior military officers, civilians from the National Nuclear Security Administration, the State Department and the National Security Agency, and representatives from the nation's nuclear laboratories, Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore.

http://www.omaha.com/index.php?u_np=0&u_pg=36&u_sid=812789

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Washington Post

August 1, 2003

Pg. 3

Md. Pond Produces No Anthrax Microbes

FBI Sought Clues In Deadly Attacks

By Allan Lengel and Guy Gugliotta, Washington Post Staff Writers

Lab tests of soil samples taken from a Frederick pond that the FBI drained in June have shown no traces of anthrax bacteria, law enforcement sources said, a disappointment to authorities who were hoping the high-stakes gamble would pay off.

The FBI spent about \$250,000 and three weeks draining 1.45 million gallons of water from the pond in a search for evidence -- including clothing and soil samples -- that might lead to the culprit who sent the deadly anthrax bacteria in the mail that killed five people and sickened 17 others in the fall of 2001.

But the search netted nothing more than a hodgepodge of items -- a gun, a bicycle, fishing lures -- none of which appeared to be linked to the case, sources said.

"Clearly there were no home runs," said one law enforcement source, who acknowledged that technicians had found nothing after completing tests on materials dredged from the pond.

Debra Weierman, a spokeswoman for the FBI's Washington field office, declined to comment yesterday.

Law enforcement sources said FBI officials knew the laborious undertaking was a long shot but, after much internal debate, decided to proceed rather than be second-guessed as to whether they were being thorough enough.

With the latest excursion in the Frederick Municipal Forest leading to a dead end, investigators are continuing to work with scientists to genetically code the anthrax bacteria in hopes of tracing it to a particular lab, law enforcement sources said.

Investigators also are retracing some steps in the probe and re-interviewing people, a common investigative technique used in hard-to-crack cases in need of fresh leads.

Investigators have turned again to the anthrax attacks at American Media Inc. in Boca Raton, Fla., where photo editor Robert Stevens died and mailroom employee Ernesto Blanco fell seriously ill, sources said. Blanco's daughter, Maria Orth, said the FBI interviewed her father in late June but had told him not to disclose details of the interview.

The FBI's interest in the Frederick forest first surfaced publicly last December when agents conducted a search of ponds and the forest, about eight miles from the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick. The institute is one of the nation's primary anthrax research centers.

The search of the area was prompted by a tip that Steven J. Hatfill, a bioterrorism expert who once worked as a researcher at the institute, had talked hypothetically about how he might dispose of contaminated materials in the water. Authorities have identified him as a "person of interest" in the investigation.

"It comes as no news to Dr. Hatfill that the search of the pond yielded nothing," Hatfill's attorney, Thomas Connolly, said yesterday. "Dr. Hatfill had no involvement in the anthrax attack. It is now time for those law enforcement officials who have orchestrated a campaign of smears to do the honorable thing and issue an apology to Dr. Hatfill and an apology to the taxpayers for spending a quarter-million dollars on a wild goose chase."

In December, divers found a plastic box with two holes that resembled a glove box used to safely handle chemicals. Something resembling a boot lace, attached to the box, yielded a false positive in a test for anthrax spores; a subsequent test came up negative, law enforcement sources have said.

Some investigators theorized that the box was used for the anthrax attacks before it was dumped in the pond.

Another theory was that the culprit produced anthrax spores in the box while it was submerged to lessen the possibility of exposure.

But others believed the box was unrelated to the case and may have been used to produce some type of illegal street drug.

A law enforcement source said the FBI continued to analyze the plastic box and other items recovered from the pond by divers over the winter.

The excursion into the Frederick area brought the FBI no closer to showing that Hatfill had any ties to the case.

"Deductive reasoning says that if you think a person is your guy, but you can't find anything to put him in the game, you've got to keep looking at others," said one law enforcement source.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10591-2003Jul31.html>

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Moscow Times

August 1, 2003

Pg. 3

Putin Puts Conditions On Nuclear Tests

By Associated Press

President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that Russia would continue refraining from nuclear tests only on the condition that other nuclear powers do not conduct them either.

While Putin did not single out any country by name, his statement appeared to be a thinly veiled warning to the United States, which has declined to ratify a global nuclear test ban and kept the door open on a possible resumption of nuclear tests.

The Soviet Union conducted its last nuclear test explosion in 1990, a year before its collapse, and Russia has maintained a moratorium on such tests since then. The United States suspended underground nuclear tests in 1992, although officials have not ruled out resuming them in the future.

"We intend to keep the obligations we have undertaken, but on certain conditions, the most important of which is a similar attitude to these obligations by other nuclear powers," Putin was quoted as saying during a visit to Sarov.

The U.S. administration has sought to reduce the time needed to restart such tests should that prove necessary to verify the readiness of U.S. nuclear arsenals. Moscow has strongly urged Washington to adhere to the moratorium and urged it to ratify a global nuclear test ban.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/08/01/013.html>

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Los Angeles Times

August 4, 2003

Pg. 1

Iran Closes In On Ability To Build A Nuclear Bomb

Tehran's reactor program masks strides toward weapons capability, a Times investigation finds. France warns against exports to Islamic Republic.

By Douglas Frantz, Times Staff Writer

VIENNA — After more than a decade of working behind layers of front companies and in hidden laboratories, Iran appears to be in the late stages of developing the capacity to build a nuclear bomb. Iran insists that like many countries it is only building commercial nuclear reactors to generate electricity for homes and factories. "Iran's efforts in the field of nuclear technology are focused on civilian application and nothing else," President Mohammad Khatami said on state television in February. "This is the legitimate right of the Iranian people."

But a three-month investigation by The Times — drawing on previously secret reports, international officials, independent experts, Iranian exiles and intelligence sources in Europe and the Middle East — uncovered strong evidence that Iran's commercial program masks a plan to become the world's next nuclear power. The country has been engaged in a pattern of clandestine activity that has concealed weapons work from international inspectors. Technology and scientists from Russia, China, North Korea and Pakistan have propelled Iran's nuclear program much closer to producing a bomb than Iraq ever was.

No one is certain when Iran might produce its first atomic weapon. Some experts said two or three years; others believe the government has probably not given a final go-ahead. But it is clear that Iran is moving purposefully and rapidly toward acquiring the capability.

Among the findings:

*A confidential report prepared by the French government in May concluded that Iran is surprisingly close to having enriched uranium or plutonium for a bomb. The French warned other governments to exercise "the most serious vigilance on their exports to Iran and Iranian front companies," according to a copy of the report provided by a foreign intelligence service.

*Samples of uranium taken by U.N. inspectors in Iran in June tested positive for enrichment levels high enough to be consistent with an attempt to build a nuclear weapon, according to a foreign intelligence officer and an American diplomat. The Reuters news service first reported the possibility that the material was weapons-grade last month.

*Iran is concealing several weapons research laboratories and evidence of past activity at a plant disguised as a watch-making factory in a Tehran suburb. In June, U.N. inspectors were refused access to two large rooms and barred from testing samples at the factory, called the Kalaye Electric Co.

*Tehran secretly imported 1.8 tons of nuclear material from China in 1991 and processed some of it to manufacture uranium metal, which would be of no use in Iran's commercial program but would be integral to weapons production.

*As early as 1989, Pakistani generals offered to sell Iran nuclear weapons technology. Abdul Qadeer Khan, a Pakistani nuclear scientist regarded by the United States as a purveyor of nuclear secrets, has helped Iran for years. "Pakistan's role was bigger from the beginning than we thought," said a Middle Eastern intelligence official.

*North Korean military scientists recently were monitored entering Iranian nuclear facilities. They are assisting in the design of a nuclear warhead, according to people inside Iran and foreign intelligence officials. So many North Koreans are working on nuclear and missile projects in Iran that a resort on the Caspian coast is set aside for their exclusive use.

*Russian scientists, sometimes traveling to Iran under false identities and working without their government's approval, are helping to complete a special reactor that could produce weapons-grade plutonium. Moscow insists that it is providing only commercial technology for the civilian reactor under construction near the Persian Gulf port of Bushehr, an assertion disputed by Washington.

*In recent months, Iran has approached European companies to buy devices that can manipulate large volumes of radioactive material, technology to forge uranium metal and plutonium and switches that could trigger a nuclear weapon. European intelligence sources said Tehran's shopping list was a strong indication that Iran has moved to the late stages of weapons development.

Regional Impact

A nuclear-armed Iran would present the United States with a difficult political and military equation. Iran would be the first avowed enemy of Israel to possess a nuclear bomb. It also has been labeled by the Bush administration as a state sponsor of international terrorism.

Iranian nuclear weapons could shift the balance of power in the region, where Washington is trying to establish pro-American governments in Afghanistan and Iraq. Both of those nations border Iran and are places where Tehran wants to exert influence that could conflict with U.S. intentions, particularly in Iraq.

The Bush administration, which partly justified its war against Iraq by stressing concerns that Saddam Hussein had revived his nuclear weapons program, calls a nuclear-armed Iran unacceptable. At his news conference Wednesday, President Bush said he hopes international pressure will convince the Iranians that "development of a nuclear weapon is not in their interests," but he added that "all options remain on the table."

Foreign intelligence officials told The Times that the Central Intelligence Agency, which has long contended that Iran is building a bomb, has briefed them on a contingency plan for U.S. air and missile attacks against Iranian

nuclear installations. "It would be foolish not to present the commander in chief with all of the options, including that one," said one of the officials.

A CIA spokeswoman declined to confirm or deny that such a plan has been drafted. "We wouldn't talk about anything like that," she said.

There is precedent for such a strike. Israeli fighter-bombers destroyed a French-built nuclear reactor outside Baghdad in 1981 shortly before it was to go online. The attack set back Iraq's nuclear program and drove it underground.

Taking out Iran's nuclear infrastructure would prove tougher, said Israeli military planners and outside analysts. For one thing, the facilities are spread around the country and small installations are still secret. At least one key facility is being built to withstand conventional airstrikes.

Contacts between Washington and Tehran are very limited, and analysts said U.S. decision-making is still dominated by a distrust of Iran rooted in the taking of American hostages during the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and an ideological aversion to negotiating with a regime regarded as extremist.

"The administration does not have a strategy because there is a fight in the administration over whether you should even deal with this government in Iran," said George Perkovich, a nuclear weapons expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington.

Inspections' Challenge

For now, the Bush administration is pinning much of its hopes of containing Iranian nuclear ambitions on the same international inspection apparatus that it blames for failing to locate weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

So far, the U.N.-affiliated International Atomic Energy Agency, based here in Vienna, has preferred negotiation to confrontation with Iran.

In a June 16 report to the 35 countries represented on the agency's board, its director-general, Mohamed ElBaradei, criticized Iran for concealing many of its nuclear activities. But he resisted U.S. pressure to declare Iran in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which was created in 1968 to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

Inspections are continuing along with Iranian roadblocks to a thorough examination, according to officials monitoring the progress. Still, IAEA officials hope to have a clearer picture of Iran's nuclear program by Sept. 8, when a follow-up report to the board is due.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry did not respond to telephone requests for interviews or to written questions for this article. Iran said last year that it plans to build six civilian reactors to generate electricity for its fast-growing population of 65 million. Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi has said that allegations that Iran is concealing a weapons program are "poisonous and disdainful rumors" spread by the United States.

Iran's civilian nuclear energy program started in 1974 and was interrupted by the Islamic Revolution. It got back on track in 1995, when Russia signed an \$800-million contract to complete the commercial reactor at Bushehr, which is scheduled to come online next year.

Russia also promised to sell Iran the uranium fuel to power the reactor. But Iran maintains that it wants to develop its own nuclear fuel-making capability, a position that has roused international suspicions.

Typically, nations with civilian nuclear programs buy fuel from the countries that export the reactors because the fuel-making process is complicated and expensive. In the most common way to make the fuel, uranium ore is converted to a gas and pumped into centrifuges, where rotors spinning at twice the speed of sound separate isotopes. The process concentrates, or "enriches," the uranium to the point that fission can be sustained in a reactor, which pumps out heat to drive electrical turbines.

The same enrichment process can concentrate fissionable uranium at greater levels to produce material for a bomb. Countries that try to enrich their own uranium or manufacture plutonium in special reactors are immediately suspected of trying to join the elite nuclear arms club. Israel, India and Pakistan developed their own plants for producing fissile material for bombs under the guise of commercial reactors.

Iran agreed not to produce nuclear weapons when it signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1970, which opened the door for it to acquire civilian reactors. The treaty does not prohibit Iran from producing or possessing enriched uranium but requires it to submit its nuclear facilities to international monitoring to ensure that materials are not diverted to weapons use.

Iran has permitted inspections of its declared commercial nuclear facilities. But last year, an Iranian exile group pinpointed a secret underground enrichment plant outside Natanz, a small mountain town about 200 miles south of Tehran known for its bracing climate and fruit orchards.

In December, the Institute for Science and International Security, a small think tank in Washington, published satellite photos of Natanz from the archives of a commercial firm, DigitalGlobe. The photos showed large-scale construction inside the perimeter of a security fence. Among the buildings were a pilot centrifuge plant and two underground halls big enough for tens of thousands of centrifuges, the institute said.

Pressure mounted to allow international monitors into Natanz, and senior IAEA officials visited the plant in February. They found 160 assembled centrifuges and components for 1,000 more. Moreover, the equipment was to be housed in bunkers 75 feet deep, with walls 8 feet thick.

The level of centrifuge development at Natanz already reflects thousands of hours of testing and advanced technological work, experts said. By comparison, Iraq had tested a single centrifuge for about 100 hours when IAEA inspectors began dismantling Baghdad's nuclear weapons program after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

"They are way ahead of where Iraq was in 1991," said a U.N. official who is familiar with both programs.

Once it is up and running, Natanz could make enough material for a bomb within a year and eventually enough for three to five bombs a year, experts said.

Nuclear Neighbors

The Iranian exile group also revealed a secret site near Arak, a city of 400,000 in western Iran known as a historic center for weaving fine Persian carpets. Under international pressure, Iran conceded in February that it plans to build a special type of reactor there that will generate plutonium for research. Plutonium is the radioactive material at the heart of some of the most powerful nuclear bombs.

The disclosures cast previous Iranian government statements in a new light.

Hashemi Rafsanjani, head of an influential government council and president of Iran from 1989 to 1997, gave a speech on Dec. 14, 2001, that has been interpreted widely as both a signal that Iran wants nuclear weapons and a threat to use them against Israel. Describing the establishment of the Jewish state as the worst event in history, Rafsanjani warned, "In due time the Islamic world will have a military nuclear device, and then the strategy of the West would reach a dead end, since one bomb is enough to destroy all Israel."

Rafsanjani has since stepped back in his rhetoric, noting in a sermon on Friday that "because of religious and moral beliefs and commitments that the Koran has created for us, we cannot and will not pursue such weapons that destroy humanity."

On July 20, Iran unveiled a missile based on a North Korean design that brings Israel within range and hailed the event as an important step in protecting the Palestinians. Experts said the new missile could be armed with a small nuclear warhead, and Iran is developing a version that will carry a heavier payload.

"Today our people and our armed forces are ready to defend their goals anywhere," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, said in a ceremony unveiling the missile.

Many outside experts as well as Iranians say that even reformers linked to Iranian President Khatami believe that Iran needs a deterrent against its nuclear neighbors — Israel, Russia and Pakistan — and possibly against the United States.

"These weapons would guarantee the territorial integrity and national security of Iran," Nasser Hadian, a professor at Tehran University who is aligned with the reformers, said in a telephone interview from New York, where he is teaching at Columbia University. "We feel that we cannot possibly rely on the world to provide security for us, and this is felt by all the factions."

At a symposium in Rome in early July, ElBaradei told the audience that stopping the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons depends greatly on eliminating the incentives for states to possess them. "It is instructive that the majority of the suspected efforts to acquire WMD are to be found in the Middle East, a hotbed of instability for over half a century," he said.

A senior U.N. official said he is not sure that Iran is developing a bomb. But the different fates of Iraq and North Korea, the other members of what Bush called the "axis of evil," demonstrate why countries out of favor with the United States might want a nuclear weapon, he added.

Iraq did not have a bomb and was easily invaded, he said, while North Korea claims to have a bomb and is trying to use it as a bargaining chip with the U.S. for security assurances and possibly increased aid. "If a regime has the feeling that it is not on the right wavelength with the United States, its position is to have a nuclear weapon," he said.

Iran faces numerous technological obstacles before it can produce a nuclear bomb, according to intelligence officials and independent experts. Once those problems are solved or close to being solved, some experts said they expect Iran to withdraw from the nonproliferation treaty, as North Korea did, and close its doors to IAEA inspectors.

"They have made the decision to develop a breakout capability, which will give them the option to leave the treaty in the future and complete a nuclear weapon within six months or a year," said Gary Samore, director of nonproliferation programs at London's International Institute for Strategic Studies and a former Clinton administration security official. "I think the program is probably unstoppable through diplomatic means."

Others disagree.

"I don't believe they have passed the point of no return," said Perkovich, the nuclear weapons expert at the Carnegie Endowment. "We should try to reverse Iran's direction by providing better, low-cost options to fuel the Bushehr

electricity plant and by easing the security concerns that make Iranians, reformers and hard-liners, interested in getting a bomb."

Diplomacy has proved an imperfect solution in the past. The Clinton administration persuaded China not to sell nuclear items to Iran in the mid-1990s. Administration officials later used sanctions and negotiations to convince Russia to curb technology transfers to Iran's civilian program that U.S. intelligence believed were being diverted to weapons work.

But Russia is committed to the Bushehr reactor, which generates 20,000 jobs for its beleaguered nuclear industry. The project also allows hundreds of Iranians to train in Russia, raising concerns within the intelligence community that knowledge and hardware for weapons work will slip through.

Officials in Moscow, outside experts and foreign intelligence officials said economics are driving continuing Russian assistance to the Iranian weapons program and that it is probably occurring without government approval. They said thousands of Russian physicists, mathematicians and other scientists are unemployed or paid a pittance at home, pushing them to sell their expertise elsewhere.

"Russian scientists are freelancing, leading to a leakage of expertise, and you can't control that," said Bobo Lo, a former Australian diplomat and associate fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. "That's where it gets really messy with the Iranians."

Multiple Sites

"Iran has made tremendous progress during the last two years, and according to our estimates it could reach a technical capability to create a nuclear device by 2006," said Anton Khlopkov, a nuclear expert at Moscow's Center for Policy Studies in Russia. "The problem is neither Russia nor the U.S. nor the IAEA had a clear understanding about real Iranian achievements in the nuclear field."

U.S. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell echoed the sentiment in March, saying on a CNN program, "It shows you how a determined nation that has the intent to develop a nuclear weapon can keep that development process secret from inspectors and outsiders, if they really are determined to do it."

Plants as large as Natanz are not necessary to build a bomb. Once the technology is developed, as few as 500 centrifuges can enrich enough uranium for a small weapon, experts said. Hiding that number would be easy, said an IAEA official, which is why intelligence officials are concerned about several smaller, still-secret plants throughout Iran.

For example, officers from two foreign intelligence agencies said weapons research is being conducted at a plant outside Kashan. One of the intelligence officials said the plant was involved in nuclear fuel production in two large halls constructed 25 feet underground.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran, the Paris-based exile group that revealed the Natanz and Arak sites, said in July that it had pinpointed two more weapons research locations in a rural area called Hashtgerd about 25 miles northwest of Tehran. The group is the political arm of the Moujahedeen Khalq, which is listed by the U.S. State Department as a terrorist group, but independent experts said its information from inside Iran has often been accurate. IAEA inspectors' requests to visit the Hashtgerd sites have been refused by Iranian authorities.

This spring, after considerable pressure from the IAEA, Iran reluctantly allowed inspectors to visit a nondescript cluster of two warehouses and smaller buildings tucked into an alley in the Tehran suburb of Ab-Ali. The place, called the Kalaye Electric Co., claimed to be a watch factory, but Iran conceded it had been an assembly point for centrifuges.

When the IAEA team arrived in March, they were refused access to the plant. A second trip in May was slightly more successful — inspectors entered the buildings, but two large rooms were declared off limits, according to new information from U.N. officials.

On June 7, inspectors returned to Iran for four days of probes at various sites. This time authorities refused to let them near Kalaye, U.N. officials said. They also were barred from using sophisticated testing equipment the team had brought from Vienna.

Such tests could detect a particle of enriched uranium within a huge radius and determine whether its concentration exceeded the 2%-to-5% level generally used in civilian reactor fuel. One IAEA official compared the ability of a swipe to detect enriched particles to finding a four-leaf clover in a field of clover 6 miles long, 9 miles wide and 150 feet deep.

But during their trip in June, IAEA inspectors took samples from an undisclosed location in Iran that tested positive for enriched uranium at a level that could be used in weapons, according to diplomatic and intelligence sources. IAEA officials refused to comment on the report.

Chinese Uranium Ore

Officials from two foreign intelligence services said Iranian scientists used nuclear material from a secret shipment from China to help enrich uranium at Kalaye and elsewhere.

China had long denied rumors about transferring nuclear materials to Iran. Early this year, U.N. officials said in interviews, the Chinese admitted selling Iran 1.8 tons of uranium ore and chemical forms of uranium used in the enrichment process in 1991.

Faced with a letter describing China's admission, Iranian authorities acknowledged receipt of the material, said the officials. At the same time, Iran said some of the chemicals were used at Tehran's Jabr ibn Hayan laboratory to make uranium metal, which has no use in Iran's commercial program but is a key part of a nuclear weapon.

In addition to China and Russia, Pakistan and North Korea have played central roles in Iran's nuclear program, according to foreign intelligence officers and confidential reports prepared by the French government and a Middle Eastern intelligence service.

North Korean technicians worked for years helping Iran develop the Shahab-3 missile, unveiled last month in Tehran. A foreign intelligence official and a former Iranian intelligence officer said the Koreans are now working on a longer-range Shahab-4 and providing assistance on designs for a nuclear warhead.

The foreign intelligence official said high-ranking North Korean military personnel have been seen at some of Iran's nuclear installations. A hotel is reserved for North Koreans in Tehran and a resort on the Caspian Sea coast northwest of Tehran has been set aside for their use, according to one of the sources and a U.N. official.

The centrifuges seen by IAEA officials at Natanz in February were based on a Pakistani design, according to intelligence officials. The design and other new evidence point to Pakistan as a bigger supplier of nuclear weapons technology to Iran than initially thought, said foreign intelligence officers, Iranian exiles and independent experts.

While U.S. intelligence is aware of Pakistan's help to Iran, the Bush administration has not pushed the issue with Islamabad because of Pakistan's role as an ally in the battle against the Al Qaeda terrorist network and Afghanistan's Taliban, outside experts and foreign intelligence officials said.

Signs of Pakistani Aid

The most convincing sign of Pakistan's role in Iran comes from what several people described as the long involvement in Iran of Khan, the scientist regarded as the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb.

The CIA concluded in a top-secret analysis last year that Khan shared critical technology on centrifuges and weapons-test data with North Korea in the late 1990s. The agency tracked at least 13 visits by Khan to North Korea over a span of several years, according to a January article in the New Yorker magazine.

Two former Iranian officials and American and foreign intelligence officials said Khan travels frequently to Tehran to share his expertise. Most recently, two of these people said, he has worked as a troubleshooter to iron out problems with the centrifuges and with weapons design.

Ali Akbar Omid Mehr, who was in charge of Pakistani affairs at Iran's Foreign Ministry in 1989 and 1990, said he came across Khan as he prepared what is known as a "green book" detailing contacts between Tehran and Islamabad.

"I saw that Mr. A. Q. Khan had been given a villa near the Caspian Sea for his help to Iran," Mehr said in an interview in Denmark, where he and his family live under assumed names since he defected in late 1995.

His account of the villa was supported by other Iranian exiles.

Khan might have played a role in a previously undisclosed offer from Pakistani military commanders to sell nuclear weapons technology to Iran in 1989, two former senior Pakistani officials said in separate interviews describing the episode.

According to their accounts, soon after Rafsanjani's election as president of Iran in 1989, he took Benazir Bhutto, then prime minister of Pakistan, aside at a reception in Tehran and told her about the proposal from her generals. Rafsanjani was commander of Tehran's armed forces at the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, and one of his goals as president was to reestablish his country as a regional power. He told Bhutto that the Pakistani generals wanted to transfer the technology secretly, on a military-to-military basis, but he wanted her to approve the transaction, the former Pakistani officials said.

Earlier that year, Bhutto had appeared before the U.S. Congress and promised that Pakistan would not export nuclear technology. Bhutto often bucked the generals, and the two officials said she blocked the transfer — at least until she was ousted in 1996.

Current Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said in an interview with The Times that his country never provided nuclear assistance to Iran, before or after he took office in a military coup in October 1999. "Zero," the general insisted. "Never worked — even before — never worked with Iran. This is the first time this has been raised, ever." Pressured by the United States, Musharraf removed Khan as head of Pakistan's nuclear program nearly two years ago. Since then, Musharraf said, Khan has been retired and his travel is not monitored.

Other intelligence officials and governments disputed Musharraf's denial.

"There are convincing indications about the origin of the technology — it is of Pakistani type — but Iran undoubtedly controls the manufacturing process of centrifuges and seems even able to improve it," said the French

government report on Iran's nuclear program, which was delivered in May to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an organization of governments with nuclear programs. A growing body of evidence suggests that Iran is simultaneously pursuing another way to produce material for a bomb.

This alternative is a heavy-water reactor, which could breed weapons-grade plutonium. In the initial stage of the program, Iran is building a plant to distill heavy water near the Qareh Chay River, about 35 miles from Arak. Heavy water, which is processed to contain elevated concentrations of deuterium, allows the reactor to operate with natural uranium as its fuel and produce plutonium.

This type of reactor is used in some places to generate electricity, but it is better known as a means of producing plutonium for weapons that bypasses uranium enrichment and its many technical obstacles. As a result, the presence of a heavy-water reactor is often regarded as a sign that a country is trying to develop a weapon.

American spy satellites had detected construction at Natanz before its existence was made public last year. But the work near Arak had remained secret because the plant under construction looked like any other distillery or similar factory, according to intelligence officials and U.N. authorities.

After exiles revealed Arak's existence, Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the president of Iran's atomic energy organization, informed the IAEA that the planned reactor was strictly meant for research and producing radioisotopes for medical use.

To many experts, however, the project raises another red flag. "For Iran, there is no justification whatsoever to have a heavy-water plant," said Samore of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Echoing him, a senior U.N. official said, "The heavy-water plant sticks out like a sore thumb."

Iran first tried to buy heavy-water reactors as turnkey projects from China and India in the mid-1990s, according to a previously undisclosed dossier prepared by a foreign intelligence agency and provided to The Times. Blocked on that front by the United States, according to former U.S. officials, Iran decided to build its own and turned to two Russian institutes.

The United States learned of the cooperation through telephone intercepts and imposed sanctions on the Russian institutes in 1999. The sanctions remain in effect, but officials with foreign intelligence agencies and the CIA said there is evidence that Russian scientists are still providing expertise for the project.

Khlopkov, the Russian nuclear expert, said he thinks it is unlikely that Russian scientists are helping Iran with any of its weapons programs. Still, he said, the recent disclosures about the Iranian program surprised Moscow and might cause Russia to cancel a second planned reactor unless Iran agrees to stricter international inspections of its nuclear facilities.

'Industrial Scale'

Despite Iran's progress, most experts said it is unlikely to develop a weapon without more outside help, particularly in procuring specialty technology. That is why some said they were alarmed by Iran's recent attempts to buy critical dual-use technology, which has military and civilian applications.

In November, German authorities blocked an attempt by businessmen allegedly working on behalf of Iran to acquire high-voltage switches that could be used for both breaking up kidney stones and triggering a nuclear weapon.

French authorities reported that French firms with nuclear expertise have received a rising number of inquiries from suspected Iranian front companies for goods with military uses.

In a previously undisclosed incident, French authorities recently stopped a French company from selling 28 specialized remote manipulators for nuclear facilities to a company in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, that the authorities said was a front for Iran's nuclear program.

Because the manipulators were designed to handle heavy volumes of radioactive material, intelligence authorities suspected they were destined for a plant in which uranium or plutonium would be reprocessed on a large scale.

"Such intent is indicative of a willingness to move from a laboratory scale to an industrial scale," said a European intelligence official who is familiar with details of the attempt.

The pattern of attempted purchases and the discovery of previously secret nuclear installations led the French government to conclude in May that Iran is using its civilian nuclear program to conceal a military program.

"Iran appears ready to develop nuclear weapons within a few years," said the French report to the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-nuke4aug04,1,7536926.story?coll=la-home-headlines>

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London Sunday Times
August 3, 2003

Kelly Had Evidence Of Iraq 'Dirty Bomb'

By Nicholas Rufford

David Kelly, the weapons expert at the centre of the Iraq dossier row, had amassed firm evidence to show that Saddam Hussein built and tested a “dirty bomb”.

Designed to cause cancer and birth defects, the radiological weapon could have been used by terrorists to create panic and widespread contamination in a crowded city.

Kelly, who apparently committed suicide last month, presented evidence of the bomb to the government in 1995 and recommended to Foreign Office officials that it feature in the government’s intelligence dossier on Iraq. However, despite secret Iraqi documents being produced to prove its existence, it was not included.

In an interview with The Sunday Times in June, Kelly said the dirty bomb was originally built by Saddam for use against Iranian troops during the Iran-Iraq war as a tactical weapon and an instrument of terror.

He said Iraq still “possessed the know-how and the materials to build a radiological weapon”. The threat was potentially more serious than some other weapons of mass destruction, he said, because Iraq still retained the main ingredients — nuclear material and high explosives.

Asked why it had not formed part of the government’s case against Iraq, Kelly said he did not know but said there were people in government who were sceptical about the potency of such a weapon.

In the wake of Kelly’s death, further questions are likely to be asked about the bomb. One reason it may have been left out of the dossier was that Iraq ended the trials in the late 1980s and there was no evidence they ever restarted. But a defence source suggested an alternative explanation: that in 1987 when Iraq conducted the trials, British military scientists were interested in the results. At that time Britain still had unofficial friendly relations with Saddam.

During evidence to the foreign affairs select committee in July, in remarks which have been largely overlooked, Kelly told John Maples, a former Conservative spokesman on defence and foreign affairs: “On one inspection that I led . . . the acknowledgment was made by General Fahih Shaheen, together with Brigadier Hassan (two senior Iraqi weapons specialists), that they had undertaken experiments with radiological weapons in 1987.”

Maples asked: “Do you think that is true?” to which Kelly replied: “Undoubtedly it is true.”

Maples pressed Kelly on why details had not been included in the dossier, saying: “A dirty nuclear bomb, I would have thought, was pretty significant.” Kelly said: “You cannot include everything.”

Maples said this weekend he remained puzzled and uneasy over why the government had excluded evidence of the dirty bomb from its dossier: “It is a mystery why this issue (of the dirty bomb) was not picked up by the government and why Kelly gave me the answer he did — that there was lots of other stuff that had to be included.”

“They (the government) were obviously looking for ways of making the dossier as attractive as they could, and as threatening as they could, and you would have thought Iraq’s ability to let off a dirty nuclear weapon was pretty serious.”

In private, Kelly thought the evidence worthy of inclusion in the dossier because of the possibility that Iraq could reactivate the programme even after it had been stripped of other non- conventional weapons.

Iraq’s dirty bomb was made from a material called radioactive zirconium which was packed into a bomb casing with high explosives. Iraq had access to zirconium stored at its Al-Tarmiya reactor site — under United Nations safeguards — ostensibly for use in its peaceful nuclear power programme.

One of the main reasons cited by British and American governments for invading Iraq was the danger that Saddam could pass weapons of mass destruction to Al-Qaeda terrorists.

Following September 11 John Ashcroft, the American attorney-general, said he had evidence of an Al-Qaeda plot to set off a dirty bomb in an American city, potentially causing hundreds of deaths and injuries and contaminating a wide area which would then have had to be sealed off for years.

The plot was revealed after an American citizen with suspected Al-Qaeda links was detained at O’Hare airport in Chicago on a flight from Pakistan last May. The threat was said to be so serious that Jose Padilla, the suspected bomber, was declared an enemy combatant and detained in solitary confinement in a military prison in South Carolina.

Kelly discovered Saddam’s dirty bomb by chance when he was leading a UN inspection team in 1995. He interviewed General Shaheen and Brigadier Hassan, who told him a military site 100 miles west of Baghdad that UN inspectors were due to visit in their search for biochemical weapons had been used as a testing ground for radiological bombs.

The inspectors later unearthed documents, marked “top secret”, which backed the accounts of the Iraqi officials. One listed “suggested uses” such as industrial centres, airports or railway stations. Diagrams of a prototype show a 12ft-long device weighing more than a ton, including thick lead shielding to protect those who handled it.

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New York Times
August 3, 2003

Facing A Second Nuclear Age

By William J. Broad

This week, ten minutes by car south of Omaha, Neb., the United States Strategic Command is holding a little-advertised meeting at which the Bush administration is to solidify its plans for acquiring a new generation of nuclear arms. Topping the wish list are weapons meant to penetrate deep into the earth to destroy enemy bunkers. The Pentagon believes that more than 70 nations, big and small, now have some 1,400 underground command posts and sites for ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

Determined to fight fire with fire, the Defense Department wants bomb makers to develop a class of relatively small nuclear arms — ranging from a fraction the size of the Hiroshima bomb to several times as large — that could pierce rock and reinforced concrete and turn strongholds into radioactive dust.

"With an effective earth penetrator, many buried targets could be attacked," the administration said in its Nuclear Posture Review, which it sent to Congress last year.

Welcome to the second nuclear age and the Bush administration's quiet responses to the age's perceived dangers. While initiatives like pre-emptive war have gotten most of the headlines (understandably, given the invasion of Iraq and its shaky aftermath), the administration is hard at work on other ways to counteract the spread of weapons like nuclear arms. Federal and private experts agree that with the notable exception of North Korea, diplomacy and arms control, for now, have taken a back seat to muscle flexing.

For instance, as part of its missile defense program, on which nearly \$8 billion is being spent this year, the administration is erecting a rudimentary system of ground-based interceptors in Alaska and California. By late next year, 10 interceptors are supposed to be ready to zap any warheads that North Korea might lob at the United States. Whether the system would work as advertised is open to doubt. But, then, so is whether North Korea could — or would — ever directly attack the United States.

Skeptics are more likely to think that North Korea has nuclear blackmail in mind, and that what the White House really is doing is an election-year bit of showing its determination, even as it moves toward negotiating with Pyongyang. Late last week, there were even signs that the North Koreans were beginning to consider a principal American demand — that they accede to talks not with the United States alone, but including other powers like China, Russia and Japan.

Still, while critics may berate the administration's plans and responses, the long-term dangers are considered real. Most alarming are the declared effort by North Korea to build a nuclear arsenal and a presumed effort by Iran. Experts talk of wide repercussions — of an atomic Iran inspiring nuclear ambitions in other Middle Eastern countries, and of North Korea prompting rapid proliferation in the Far East.

Japan is considered a likely flash point, despite its historic disdain for things nuclear after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nisohachi Hyodo, once seen as part of the lunatic fringe for promoting a plan by which Japan would quickly acquire nuclear arms, now has his own radio program on a major Tokyo station and is a popular speaker on college campuses.

And if Japan went nuclear, experts say, China might feel compelled to expand its own arsenal.

Paul Bracken, a Yale political scientist who described the second nuclear age in "Fire in the East" (HarperCollins, 1999), argued that the danger lies not just in the spread of nuclear arms but in the culture of the second age. He said most of the new powers are poor, unlike their atomic predecessors. Thus, India, Pakistan and North Korea are cannibalizing their conventional forces to finance their atomic and missile ambitions. In a crisis, he said, the military repercussions of that trend could erode the traditional restraints on nuclear arms. Pakistan, he said, "will be forced to use them earlier."

Perhaps least-known of the administration's responses to the second age is its effort to fight arms of mass destruction with arms of mass destruction. Advocates say that relatively small nuclear weapons that burrowed deep into the ground to destroy enemy bunkers would cause reduced collateral damage — that is, less accidental destruction beyond the intended target.

"These kinds of capabilities could contribute to our ability to prevent attacks by deterring them," said Keith B. Payne, who from April 2002 to this May argued for the new arms as deputy assistant secretary of defense for forces policy. "If an opponent thinks he has a sanctuary, he could be emboldened to aggression."

Dr. Payne, who plans to be at the Omaha meeting, is now president of the National Institute for Public Policy, a Washington research group. He added that the new arms might dissuade an enemy from ever building deep bunkers. "It's not worth the investment," he said.

Critics hate the proposed arms, fearing that their relative smallness will breach the firewall between conventional and nuclear war and pose a new threat to world security. They also question whether radioactive fallout can be contained and denounce the project's overall secrecy.

"We worked hard to get civilian control over nuclear arms," said Greg Mello, director of the Los Alamos Study Group, a private organization in Albuquerque that monitors arms labs. "Even though nuclear weapons are inimical to the democratic spirit, the idea of these being made by a small minority is especially dangerous."

Dr. Payne challenged the idea that small weapons would lower the bar for nuclear war, saying America had deployed very small atomic arms in the past. "There's no evidence I've seen," he said, "that these made any U.S. president anything other than very reluctant to think about the use of nuclear weapons."

If the arms are ever built, critics say, the biggest hurdle to bunker busting may be targeting. Atomic intelligence is notoriously crude, as the failed weapons hunt in Iraq suggests. Recently, America's spies have also had trouble tracking nuclear arms production in Iran and in North Korea, which has a maze of secret sites and buried bunkers. Congress, too, is uneasy about the new weapons, which are still in the research stage. Last month, a House appropriations subcommittee cut back on the administration's 2004 budget request for the arms, citing organizational disarray among the nation's bomb makers and calling "pursuit of a broad range of new initiatives premature." Robert S. Norris of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a private group in Washington that monitors nuclear trends, said the rebuff from the Republican-led House was surprising. "But they may buy it," he added, "if the administration comes up with a clearer plan."

That tops the agenda this Wednesday and Thursday at Offutt Air Force Base south of Omaha. Air Force Maj. Michael Shavers, a Pentagon spokesman, said the meeting will involve some 150 people from weapons labs, the Defense and State Departments, the Energy Department, its National Nuclear Security Administration and the White House.

The United States Strategic Command, the host, controls the nation's deployed nuclear arms and writes the war plans for their use.

Eager to shed light on the secretive meeting, peace advocates organized a descent on Omaha this weekend to protest the new arms with educational workshops, a rally, a commemoration of the Japanese bombings, a peace concert and a vigil.

Dr. Bracken, the Yale political scientist, said the administration has a historic opportunity, of the Nixon-in-China variety, to pioneer a new kind of arms control that actually lowers the risk of war.

For instance, he said, the United States could renounce the first use of nuclear arms. He said that step would help counteract the current downward spiral toward a lower nuclear threshold. "In the cold war you needed to retain that," he said of the threat to use nuclear arms first. "But today, with more players in the game, there's a lot to be gained by giving it up."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/03/weekinreview/03BROA.html>

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Army Sets Aug. 6 Date For Beginning Chemical Weapons Burns

Limited Incineration Planned For First Months

POSTED: 8:14 a.m. CDT August 1, 2003

MONTGOMERY, Ala. -- The U.S. Army will begin destroying more than 2,200 tons of nerve agent at the Anniston Army Depot next week, acting Army Secretary Les Brownlee said Thursday.

The announcement came one day after the Alabama Department of Environmental Management issued a permit allowing the Army to start up its \$1 billion incinerator.

Brownlee gave the order to begin destroying the deadly nerve agent and mustard gas Aug. 6 despite worries from many nearby residents and environmental groups that incineration is not safe enough for such a heavily populated area. About 35,000 people live within 9 miles of the depot, and more than 250,000 live within a 30-mile circle.

Brownlee said the Army had been committed to ensuring the safety of east Alabama residents.

"Public safety remains our principal interest," he said in a statement issued late Thursday.

The Army said it plans to burn only a limited number of weapons at first, while it continues to over-pressurize schools and other community buildings. Nerve agent drained from M-55 rockets would be destroyed only during pre-announced periods -- on weekends and between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

The operation will ramp up to full speed later in the fall.

About 2,254 tons of Cold War-era chemical weapons have been stored at the Anniston Army Depot for decades.

The Army contends it can no longer safely store the weapons there and that moving the munitions elsewhere would be too dangerous, leaving incineration as the safest option.

But opponents say the Army hasn't fully disclosed all the problems with the incinerators. Lawsuits have been filed ranging from a request that the Army scrap incineration and neutralize the agents chemically, to claims that

minorities would be unfairly endangered by the incinerator, located in an area that is disproportionately black compared to Alabama's population.

Craig Williams, executive director of the Chemical Weapons Working Group, which has filed suit in Washington, D.C., and Birmingham in attempts to block the incinerator's startup, said his organization plans to ask for a restraining order Monday in federal court.

He said it was "arrogant and disrespectful" of the Army to say it had resolved all safety issues. "The track record of these facilities is nothing short of intimidating should you live in a community where it's being used," Williams said. Gov. Bob Riley and Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., have yet to sign off on a plan to let the facility begin operation without all planned community safety measures in place. Riley said last week that he wants the power to shut down the incinerator if the Army has not fulfilled all safety requirements.

Shelby issued a statement late Thursday calling on the Army to "move quickly to complete the remaining safety measures and to operate on a limited basis until the safety measures are fully implemented."

The United States has agreed under an international treaty to destroy 31,000 tons of chemical weapons by 2007. Roughly 25 percent of the stockpile has been destroyed at incinerators in Utah and on a tiny atoll in the Pacific.

The National Research Council concluded in December that chemical weapons could be safely incinerated despite chemical releases and violations at the two operational incinerators.

<http://www.nbc13.com/news/2374585/detail.html>

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Washington Times

August 4, 2003

Pg. 1

North Korea Bans Bolton From Talks

By Soo-Jeong Lee, Associated Press

SEOUL — Pyongyang, calling a senior American official "human scum" for criticizing North Korea's leader, banned him from U.S.-proposed multilateral talks on its suspected development of nuclear weapons.

North Korea said that it won't deal with U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton because he described communist leader Kim Jong Il as a "tyrannical dictator" and said "life is a hellish nightmare" for many North Koreans.

Mr. Bolton made the remarks during a visit to South Korea last week.

"Such human scum and bloodsucker is not entitled to take part in the talks," said a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman, according to the North's official KCNA news agency.

"We have decided not to consider him as an official of the U.S. administration any longer nor to deal with him," the unidentified spokesman said.

He said, however, that there was no change in Pyongyang's decision to hold six-country talks on the nuclear issue.

The countries involved are expected to be North Korea, the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea.

The United States said yesterday it was committed to finding a diplomatic solution to the nuclear standoff and was not trying to end Mr. Kim's rule.

In an interview with selected U.S. media outlets, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said the six-way talks can allay the North's fears of a U.S. invasion.

"Our policy, the president's policy, is to work diplomatically with our partners and the North Koreans to find a diplomatic political solution," Mr. Powell said in the interview, made public yesterday.

Mr. Powell was asked about a previous comment by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz that Mr. Kim's administration was "teetering on the edge of economic collapse." Mr. Wolfowitz said that could be used as "a major point of leverage" against Mr. Kim.

"I don't have a basis for saying there is an imminent collapse," Mr. Powell said.

"Right now there is a government there. It's been there for a lot of decades, and that's what I have to deal with," Mr. Powell said. "What the situation would be following a catastrophic collapse, I don't really know. I don't think it's anything that any of North Korea's neighbors at the moment wish to see."

Mr. Powell said the pending talks could lead to more U.S. help for "the people of North Korea." But he denied that the Bush administration used aid for the impoverished state to lure Mr. Kim into accepting the multilateral format.

Pyongyang agreed to the six-way talks despite saying for months it would only consent to bilateral talks with the United States. The North says it will work on the sidelines of the negotiations to push for one-on-one talks with Washington, which has insisted on multilateral talks because it says the North's nuclear program is a regional concern.

No date has been set for the talks, which are expected to be held in China, and no decision has been made on the level of the officials who will attend.

A Japanese newspaper reported yesterday that Washington and Tokyo have begun talks on forming an inspection team to ensure that North Korea eliminates its nuclear program.

Mr. Bolton discussed details of the plan with senior Japanese officials Friday, after the North had agreed to the multilateral discussions, the Yomiuri Shimbun said.

The inspectors would likely come from the five countries expected to participate in the talks with North Korea, the newspaper said. The report could not be immediately confirmed, and there was no word on whether Pyongyang would allow the inspections.

The United States and North Korea last held official talks in April in Beijing. They've since had unofficial discussions in New York via North Korean diplomats at the United Nations.

The nuclear standoff began in October, when U.S. officials said North Korea acknowledged having a uranium-based nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20030804-121425-6611r.htm>

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Wall Street Journal

August 4, 2003

The Next Korean War

By R. James Woolsey and Thomas G. McInerney

The White House had a shape-of-the-table announcement last week: North Korea would participate in six-sided talks with the U.S., China, Russia, South Korea and Japan. This was welcome but it changes nothing fundamental. Kim Jong Il has clearly demonstrated his capacity for falsehood in multilateral as well as bilateral forums. The bigger, and much worse, news is the overall course of events this summer.

In early July, krypton 85 was detected in locations that suggested that this gas, produced when spent nuclear fuel is reprocessed into plutonium for nuclear weapons, may have emanated from a site other than North Korea's known reprocessing facility at Yongbyon.

There would be nothing surprising about a hidden reprocessing plant -- North Korea has thousands of underground facilities. But if the reprocessing of the 8,000 spent fuel rods that the North Koreans took out of storage at Yongbyon last January -- when it ousted international inspectors and walked away from the Non-Proliferation Treaty -- has been completed clandestinely, then Kim Jong Il may already have enough material for several more weapons to go with the one or two he is thought to have from previous reprocessing.

Several Additional Bombs

But even if the krypton was emanating from Yongbyon, this still means that several additional bombs' worth of plutonium could be available a few months from now. Add this to Pyongyang's breach of the 1994 Agreed Framework by its secret uranium-enrichment program, and its boast in April that it would sell weapons-grade plutonium to whomever it pleased (rogue states? terrorist groups?), and it is apparent that the world has weeks to months, at most, to deal with this issue, not months to years.

Interdiction of shipments out of North Korea will not stop the export of such fissionable material. Even if current efforts for nations to intercept North Korean shipping are successful, this would be completely inadequate to the purpose. The North Koreans' principal exports today are ballistic missiles and illegal drugs, both clandestine. As former Secretary of Defense William Perry recently noted, the amount of plutonium needed for a bomb is about the size of a soccer ball.

There is no reason the North Koreans would refrain from using air shipments, including those protected by diplomatic immunity, to smuggle and sell such material.

In the midst of the just announced six-way talks, one fact stands out: The only chance for a peaceful resolution of this crisis before North Korea moves clearly into the ranks of nuclear powers is for China to move decisively. Indeed we see no alternative but for China to use its substantial economic leverage, derived from North Korea's dependence on it for fuel and food, to press, hard and immediately, for a change in regime. Kim Jong Il's regime has shown that agreements signed with it, by anyone, mean nothing.

What could induce China to follow such an uncharacteristically decisive course? North Korea's escalating nuclear aspirations run the risk of creating not one but four new nuclear powers in Asia. South Korea, Japan and probably Taiwan will find it very difficult to refrain from moving toward nuclear capability as North Korea becomes more threatening. Also, China must be clearly told that North Korea's long-range ballistic missile program and the prospect of its sale of fissionable material to terrorists make this a direct matter of U.S. security. Presidents Bush and Roh declared in May that they will "not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea."

Unfortunately, the reflexive rejection in the public debate of the use of force against North Korea has begun to undermine U.S. ability both to influence China to act and to take the preparatory steps necessary for effectiveness if

force should be needed. The U.S. and South Korea must instead come together and begin to assess realistically what it would take to conduct a successful military operation to change the North Korean regime.

It is not reasonable to limit the use of force to a surgical strike destroying Yongbyon. Although the facility would need to be destroyed, the possible existence of another plutonium reprocessing plant or of uranium-enrichment facilities, or of plutonium hidden elsewhere, makes it infeasible to limit the use of force to such a single objective. Moreover, military action against North Korea must protect South Korea from certain attack (particularly from artillery just north of the DMZ that can reach Seoul). In short, we must be prepared to win a war, not execute a strike.

U.S. and South Korean forces have spent nearly half a century preparing to fight and win such a war. We should not be intimidated by North Korea's much-discussed artillery. Around half of North Korea's 11,000-plus artillery pieces, some of them in caves, are in position to fire on Seoul. But all are vulnerable to stealth and precision weapons -- e.g., caves can be sealed by accurate munitions.

Massive air power is the key to being able both to destroy Yongbyon and to protect South Korea from attack by missile or artillery. There is a significant number of hardened air bases available in South Korea and the South Koreans have an excellent air force of approximately 550 modern tactical aircraft. The U.S. should begin planning immediately to deploy the Patriot tactical ballistic missile defense system plus Aegis ships to South Korea and Japan, and also to reinforce our tactical air forces by moving in several air wings and aircraft carrier battle groups, together with the all-important surveillance aircraft and drones.

The goal of the planning should be to be prepared on short notice both to destroy the nuclear capabilities at Yongbyon and other key North Korean facilities and to protect South Korea against attack by destroying North Korean artillery and missile sites. Our stealth aircraft, equipped with precision bombs, and cruise missiles will be crucial -- these weapons can be tailored to incinerate the WMD and minimize radiation leakage.

The key point is that the base infrastructure available in the region and the accessibility of North Korea from the sea should make it possible to generate around 4,000 sorties a day compared to the 800 a day that were so effective in Iraq. When one contemplates that the vast majority of these sorties would use precision munitions, and that surveillance aircraft would permit immediate targeting of artillery pieces and ballistic missile launch sites, we believe the use of air power in such a war would be swifter and more devastating than it was in Iraq. North Korea's geriatric air defenses -- both fighter aircraft and missiles -- would not last long. As the Iraqis understood when facing our air power, if you fly, you die.

Marine forces deployed off both coasts of North Korea could put both Pyongyang and Wonsan at risk of rapid seizure, particularly given the fact that most of North Korea's armed forces are situated along the DMZ. With over 20 of the Army's 33 combat brigades now committed it would be necessary to call up additional Reserve and National Guard units. However, the U.S. forces that would have the greatest immediate effect are Expeditionary Air Forces and Carrier Battle Groups, most of which have now been removed from the Iraqi theater.

An Assured Victory

The South Korean Army is well equipped to handle a counteroffensive into North Korea with help from perhaps two additional U.S. Army divisions, together with the above-mentioned Marine Expeditionary Force and dominant air power. We judge that the U.S. and South Korea could defeat North Korea decisively in 30 to 60 days with such a strategy. Importantly, there is "no doubt on the outcome" as the chairman of the JCS, Gen. Meyers, said at his reconfirmation hearing on July 26 to the Senate.

We are not eager to see force used on the Korean peninsula. It is better to resolve this crisis without war. However, unless China succeeds in ending North Korea's nuclear weapons development -- and we believe this will require a change in regime -- Americans will be left with the threat to our existence described by Secretary Perry when he recently said that the North Korean nuclear program "poses an imminent danger of nuclear weapons being detonated in American cities."

We can hate it that we are forced now to confront this choice. But we should not take refuge in denial.

Mr. Woolsey was CIA director from 1993-95. Gen. McInerney, a retired three-star Air Force lieutenant general and former assistant vice chief of staff, is a Fox News military analyst.

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St. Louis Post-Dispatch

August 3, 2003

Aide says Saddam bluffed about weapons to prevent an attack

By Slobodan Lekic, Associated Press

He gambled that U.S. would not attack in face of divided world opinion

A close aide to Saddam Hussein says the Iraqi dictator got rid of his weapons of mass destruction but deliberately kept the world guessing about it in an effort to divide the international community and stave off a U.S. invasion. The strategy was designed to make the Iraqi dictator look strong in the eyes of the Arab world, while countries such as France and Russia would be wary of joining an American-led attack. At the same time, Saddam retained the technical know-how and brain power to restart the programs at any time.

Both Pentagon officials and weapons experts are considering this guessing-game theory as the search for chemical, biological and nuclear weapons continues. If true, it would indicate there was no imminent unconventional weapons threat from Iraq, an argument President George W. Bush used to go to war.

Saddam's alleged weapons bluff was detailed by an Iraqi official who assisted Saddam for many years. The official was not part of the national leadership, but his job provided him daily contact with the dictator and insight into the government's decision-making process during the past decade and in its critical final days.

The official refused to be identified, citing fear of assassination by Saddam's paramilitaries who, he said, remain active throughout Iraq. But in several interviews, the former aide detailed what he said were the reasons behind Saddam's disinformation campaign - which ultimately spurred an invasion and the fall of his government.

The aide said that by the mid-1990s "it was common knowledge among the leadership" that Iraq had destroyed its chemical stocks and discontinued development of biological and nuclear weapons.

But Saddam remained convinced that an ambiguous stance would deter an American attack.

"He repeatedly told me: 'These foreigners, they only respect strength, they must be made to believe we are strong,'" the aide said.

Publicly, Saddam denied having unconventional weapons. But from 1998 until 2002, he prevented U.N. inspectors from working in the country. When they finally returned in November 2002, they often complained that Iraq wasn't fully cooperating.

Iraqi scientists, including those now held by the U.S. military, have maintained that no new unconventional weapons programs were started in recent years and that all the materials from previous programs were destroyed.

Both Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have come under fire in recent weeks as weapons hunters come up empty and prewar intelligence is questioned.

The White House acknowledged recently that it included discredited information in Bush's State of the Union speech about purported Iraqi attempts to purchase uranium - a key ingredient for nuclear weapons.

More importantly, no chemical, biological or nuclear weapons have been found.

Before the invasion, the British government said that Saddam could deploy unconventional weapons within 45 minutes. The Bush administration insisted that the threat was so immediate that the world couldn't afford to wait for U.N. inspectors to wind up their searches. Despite the warnings, Iraqi troops never used such weapons during the war.

Intelligence officials at the Pentagon, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said some experts had raised the theory that Iraq put out false information to convince its enemies that it retained prohibited chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programs.

"That explanation has plausibility," said Robert Einhorn a former assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation.

"But the disposition of those missing weapons and materials still has to be explained somehow."

Iraq's claims that it destroyed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons materials could never be verified by U.N. inspectors, who repeatedly requested proof.

But U.N. inspectors, who scoured Iraq for three and a half months before the war, never found any evidence of renewed weapons programs.

Hans Blix, the former chief U.N. weapons inspector, told The Associated Press in June: "The longer that one does not find any weapons in spite of people coming forward and being rewarded for giving information, etc., the more I think it is important that we begin to ask ourselves if there were no weapons, why was it that Iraq conducted itself as it did for so many years?"

Saddam's aide suggests that the brinkmanship ultimately backfired because after Sept. 11, 2001, U.S. policy changed from containing the Iraqi leader to going after those who could supply terrorists with deadly weapons.

He described Saddam as almost "totally ignorant" of how Western democracies functioned and attributed his failure to grasp the impact of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to the fact that he increasingly surrounded himself with yes men and loyalists who were not qualified to give him expert advice on economic, military or foreign policy matters.

John Lumpkin of the Associated Press contributed to this report.

<http://www.stltoday.com/stltoday/news/stories.nsf/News/World/AC3B483BA4B68FA086256D77004683E0?OpenDocument&Headline=Aide+says+Saddam+bluffed+about+weapons+to+prevent+an+attack&highlight=2%2CSaddam%2CBluffed%2CAbout%2CWeapons%2CTo%2CPrevent%2CInvasion%2CAide%2CSays>

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Washington Post
August 3, 2003

Gaps In Plan To Halt Arms Trade

By Bradley Graham, Washington Post Staff Writer

President Bush's appeal two months ago for more aggressive international action to halt trade in weapons of mass destruction has led to the quick formation of a core group of 11 nations that has begun pooling intelligence and organizing military exercises this autumn.

Plans call for member states to strengthen trade inspection, share information about suspected shipments and step up searches and seizures of ships, planes and vehicles thought to be smuggling materials for nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Much of the initial focus will be on interdicting vessels cruising the waters around Asia, the Middle East and Europe, according to U.S. and foreign officials involved in the effort.

Just how much legal authority exists for such intensified interdiction remains unclear. Several U.S. officials said in interviews that current national and international laws provide a sufficient basis for much of what the administration has in mind. All that is needed, they said, is closer international coordination and stricter enforcement.

But some legal gaps remain, the officials acknowledged, and differences persist among legal experts over what existing law allows.

The initiative also confronts significant operational challenges in locating targeted goods, many of which are easy to hide. And it has yet to win the support of such powers as China and Russia, or critical regional players such as South Korea.

Complicating efforts to enlist some key states is the perception that the U.S.-led effort is intended to skirt the United Nations and operate outside formal international treaties. In particular, many see the initiative as a kind of subterfuge for blockading North Korea amid tension over its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Administration officials insist the interdiction plan is meant to be a global campaign to combat a global problem.

But in a speech Thursday in Seoul, John R. Bolton, a U.S. undersecretary of state, tied it to North Korea.

He said group members have "put North Korea and Iran at the top of the list of proliferant countries." He added that although the United States still hopes for a diplomatic solution with Pyongyang, the interdiction effort should make clear to North Korea that it will not be allowed "to peddle its deadly arsenals to rogue states and terrorists throughout the world."

To sign up more participants, the United States and its partners are preparing a diplomatic drive directed at coastal states in Asia and the Middle East, as well as at nations whose flagged ships or territory are commonly used by traffickers, officials said.

At the same time, according to the officials, the administration has no plans for now to seek blanket U.N. Security Council approval for seizures involving nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. Such a move, U.S. officials fear, would trigger a divisive and prolonged debate over what qualifies for seizure.

Bush announced the heightened interdiction effort, formally called the Proliferation Security Initiative, in Poland on May 31. Since then, representatives of the 11-member group have met twice -- in Madrid and Brisbane, Australia -- to review the legal basis for action, establish channels for intelligence sharing and write a statement of principles, which is still in draft form. At the Brisbane meeting last month, the group agreed to hold three maritime exercises this fall, most likely in the Pacific and the Mediterranean Sea, to practice search and seizure methods.

Membership includes Britain, France, Germany, Australia and Japan, as well as several other maritime states -- Italy, Spain and Portugal -- and two more European nations eager to contribute, Poland and the Netherlands.

Much of the impetus for the initiative came out of the administration's frustration in December when Spanish ships, acting at the behest of the United States, seized a ship carrying Scud missiles from North Korea to Yemen in open waters. U.S. officials suspected the missiles may have been bound ultimately for Iraq. But the Cambodian-flagged vessel and its cargo were released when Yemen protested, saying it had ordered the weapons for its defense.

Shipments of such missiles are not banned under international law.

U.S. and Spanish authorities conducted the operation in the context of a Multinational Interception Force that enforced 12 years of U.N. sanctions against Iraq. With the end of major combat in Iraq and the dissolution of that maritime force, the new initiative was launched to establish an even broader coalition of the willing.

"The idea is to get political resolve on the part of other countries, to clear away a lot of the underbrush -- both political and operational -- in advance of a potential interdiction," a senior administration official said, "so that if an opportunity arises, we won't have to start from square one."

International maritime law allows nations to board suspect ships with the permission of the country under whose flag the ship is sailing or to board stateless ships without a flag. Vessels carrying illicit cargo also can be seized, as can ships carrying materials between countries that have obligations under international conventions.

"The plan is to use existing authorities in the first instance, because if you do that in a proactive way by sharing information with others and being prepared to move, you'll have an 80 to 85 percent solution," a White House official said.

But one big gap is the lack of an explicit international ban. Although shipments of slaves, drugs or contraband are forbidden under international law, there is no such general prohibition against trading in weapons of mass destruction.

In extreme situations, such as the sale by North Korea of a nuclear device, a strong argument can be made for declaring a clear and present danger, justifying action under the U.N. Charter's right of self-defense, U.S. officials said. But in the case, say, of shipment of "dual-use" items that have nonthreatening civilian applications as well as roles in constituting weapons of mass destruction, the law is silent.

To remedy this, some specialists have urged U.N. action.

"More important than adding one country after another to the president's initiative, you need to get something through the U.N. Security Council," said Henry D. Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center. "The reason is, if you're going to get international common usage, that is the most efficient way to make that happen."

But officials said that if the administration goes to the United Nations, it more likely will be to win approval for action only in a specific case. Similarly, the officials said not to expect Bush's initiative to lead to the creation of anything as grand as a new maritime task force or international enforcement bureaucracy -- or even a formal announcement putting North Korea, Iran and other target states on notice that interdictions will begin in earnest. "It's not like there's going to be some big unveiling, where the marker will come down and all of a sudden we're going to be out there looking for bad guys shipping around bad things," a Pentagon official said. "We're doing that now."

Indeed, U.S. officials have made clear that U.S. forces are prepared to undertake interdictions in international waters or elsewhere if they get a good lead. But then again, obtaining those leads may be easier said than done, given the difficulty of locating often small, easy-to-conceal shipments of nuclear bomb parts or chemical and biological warfare agents in the vast oceans.

"I don't think the debate is necessarily about how we will do" interdictions, Paul O'Sullivan, a senior official with Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, said at a Brisbane news conference July 10. "The debate is, can we have enough information about the proliferation activities that are going on in a timely way. That's been perhaps our biggest challenge, and that's what we're trying to press."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A15522-2003Aug2.html>

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