



USAF COUNTERPROLIFERATION CENTER  
**CPC OUTREACH JOURNAL**  
Maxwell AFB, Alabama

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Issue No. 281, 11 August 2003

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## **Nuclear Weapons: Opportunities Exist to Improve the Budgeting, Cost Accounting, and Management Associated with the Stockpile Life Extension Program.**

GAO-03-583, July 28.

<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-583>

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## **Regime ordered chemical attack, investigator says**

**By Bryan Bender, Globe Correspondent, 8/8/2003**

WASHINGTON -- A top Bush administration weapons investigator told Congress in closed testimony last week that he has uncovered solid information from interviews, documents, and physical evidence that Iraqi military forces were ordered to attack US troops with chemical weapons, but did not have the time or capability to follow through, according to senior defense and intelligence officials.

The alleged findings by David Kay, a former UN weapons inspector now working for the United States, would buttress the administration's claim that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was concealing weapons of mass destruction -- a key component of President Bush's case for war that has since fallen into dispute.

Kay's report acknowledged that his team of 1,400 investigators had not yet found any such weapons, raising the possibility that Hussein either hid them, destroyed them, or was simply bluffing in his orders to the Republican Guard.

Kay told Congress his team is searching new sites almost daily, interviewing scientists and captured leaders, and sifting through thousands of pages of documents, officials said.

A summary of his report, described by officials who have seen it, said Republican Guard commanders were ordered by Hussein's regime to launch chemical-filled shells at oncoming coalition troops, and that Kay believes he will soon know why the shells weren't launched.

"They have found evidence that an order was given," but no definitive explanation for why the weapons weren't used, said a senior intelligence official with access to Kay's report who asked not to be identified.

Before the war, US defense officials, citing what they described as intercepted Iraqi military communications, said that Iraqi forces were ordered to use chemical weapons. .

On March 28, one week into the war, US Central Command's deputy director for operations, Brigadier General Vincent Brooks, said, "We have seen indications through a variety of sources . . . [that] orders have been given that at a certain point chemical weapons may be used."

Brooks cited the discovery of hundreds of chemical protection suits at locations south of Baghdad as an indication that Iraqis were prepared to engage in chemical warfare.

But despite Kay's report, some specialists are skeptical.

David Albright, a former UN weapons inspector who has worked with Kay, said Kay has long been a zealous advocate of the idea that Iraqis had been poised to use chemical weapons, even asserting after the war that the weapons had been dumped in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

No weapons have been found in the rivers.

"He started with such a strong view that this is true that I am suspicious," said Albright, now president of the Institute for Science and International Security in Washington. "If the military had this order, where did the weapons go?"

A former paid commentator for NBC News, Kay has alienated some people by having network cameras follow him as he searches for weapons.

Still, US officials expressed confidence that Kay not only would substantiate the claims that Iraqi commanders were given orders to use chemical weapons, but that he would show what happened to the weapons.

"It sounded like they had something that they could hold up and say 'Here is the reason why it didn't take place,'" said a defense official who also has read Kay's progress report.

Another senior defense official, who had not read the report, suggested that the United States may have convinced Iraqi field commanders not to use the weapons, by warning them through leaflets, radio broadcasts, and secret communications that they could face war-crimes charges.

"We tried to dissuade them in very public ways, and there were clearly covert ways as well," the official said on condition of anonymity.

Other officials had a variety of explanations of why the weapons were not used. Among the possibilities: In the chaos that ensued during the war, the weapons could not be delivered to front-line units; they were hastily hidden and have yet to be found; or they were destroyed by Iraqi officials or US air attacks. Some even hold out the possibility that the orders were part of a disinformation campaign to deter coalition troops from invading.

Kay, speaking to reporters on Capitol Hill last week, suggested he believes the weapons were hidden away.

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

Other top administration officials this week expressed new confidence that illegal weapons will ultimately be found in Iraq.

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, speaking to reporters at the Pentagon on Tuesday, said the recent discovery of Russian-built fighter aircraft buried in the Iraqi desert was a "classic example" of Iraq's adeptness at hiding things.

"We had not known where they were, and we'd been operating in that immediate vicinity for weeks and weeks and weeks," he said.

Proof that Iraqi troops were poised to use chemical weapons might ease criticism that the administration exaggerated the threat posed by Hussein.

But Joseph Cirincione, a nonproliferation specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said that it would not justify the administration's depiction of Hussein as an imminent threat to the United States.

"Most of us believe that there was some program and some weapons hidden," he said. "But the debate wasn't over weapons, it was over war. In four months, not a gram of anthrax has been found, not an ounce of mustard gas. Was the threat so great we had to go to war? The question for Kay is not was there mustard gas, but was there a substantial amount of mustard gas? If this is all he has -- if he has it -- this just isn't enough."

Kay said he would unveil his findings publicly within six months, officials said.

"We do not want to go forward with partial information that we have to retract afterwards," he said while briefing reporters last week. "We're building a solid case that will stand."

Indeed, one intelligence official said Kay and his team are preparing a "legal case" to prove Iraq's violations of weapons restrictions, though it is the court of public opinion, not any judicial proceeding, that the administration must sway.

This story ran on page A1 of the Boston Globe on 8/8/2003.

[http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/220/nation/Regime\\_ordered\\_chemical\\_attack\\_investigator\\_says+.shtml](http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/220/nation/Regime_ordered_chemical_attack_investigator_says+.shtml)

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Washington Times

August 8, 2003

Pg. 1

## **U.S. Ready To Offer N. Korea Guarantee**

### ***Security pledge not binding pact***

By Nicholas Kravev, The Washington Times

The Bush administration yesterday said it is prepared to offer written security guarantees to North Korea in the form of a joint document with other regional powers in upcoming nuclear talks.

Although such a pledge would not be a formal treaty subject to congressional ratification, it nevertheless could be endorsed by Congress in a resolution, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell told reporters at the Washington Foreign Press Center.

"There should be ways to capture assurances to the North Koreans — from not only the United States, but we believe from other parties in the region — that there is no hostile intent among the parties that might be participating in such a discussion," Mr. Powell said.

"When one comes up with such a document, such a written assurance, there are ways that Congress can take note of it without it being a treaty or some kind of pact. A resolution is something like that — taking note of something."

In Tokyo, the Japanese newspaper Sankei Shimbun reported today that diplomats from the United States, Japan and South Korea will meet next Wednesday and Thursday in Washington to coordinate policy on North Korea ahead of six-nation talks on the communist state's nuclear weapons program.

The newspaper, quoting Japanese government sources, said senior diplomats from the three countries would hold "informal" talks on a joint proposal to North Korea.

The White House has said the North Korean nuclear threat can be dealt with diplomatically, but has not ruled out any options, including military action.

A security guarantee to North Korea in the context of a broad regional pledge with other countries would not change that stance because the guarantee would express intent but not be legally binding, administration officials said.

The issue is part of an intensive diplomatic effort to convene a meeting among the United States, North Korea, China, Japan, South Korea and Russia in the next few weeks.

Pyongyang repeatedly has demanded a nonaggression pact with Washington since President Bush assumed office in January 2001.

But the administration has rejected the idea, saying Mr. Bush's oral assurance that he has no intention of invading the North should be enough to satisfy the regime of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il.

Now, in an attempt to address North Korea's concerns before the planned multilateral talks, where Washington wants Pyongyang to agree to scrap its nuclear weapons program, the administration is pondering a compromise solution.

Several regional leaders, including South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun in an interview with The Washington Times in May, have called on the White House to consider offering a security assurance.

As it has done with the whole nuclear standoff, the Bush administration is trying to ensure that any security guarantees to the North involve all countries in the region.

That approach, the administration argues, would make Pyongyang less likely to cheat or break any new agreement it may sign, and would provide better accountability mechanisms if it did.

In explaining the logic, the administration cites the North's development of a secret uranium-enrichment program in violation of a 1994 nuclear deal with the Clinton administration, which Pyongyang admitted in October.

Since then, the North has reopened its plutonium plant in Yongbyon, closed after the 1994 agreement was signed, expelled U.N. inspectors and claims to have reprocessed 8,000 spent fuel rods that can be used in plutonium production — an assertion that has not been independently confirmed.

China, the most likely host of the multilateral talks and the most diplomatically active of the six participants in their preparation, yesterday sent a delegation to Pyongyang.

Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing is scheduled to visit Seoul next week. A U.S.-North Korea-China meeting was held in Beijing in April, but produced no results.

Russia, whose involvement in the nuclear diplomacy up to now has been limited, was the last country to be added to the list of participants in the talks, largely at Pyongyang's insistence.

Moscow yesterday said that it is not aware of any other conditions the North may have.

"The North Korean side has put forward no conditions and to my understanding Pyongyang is interested exactly in six-way talks," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Yuri Fedotov told Japan's NHK television.

"The most difficult stage will come when these talks begin. And it is hard to expect any quick success. All parties will apparently need to be extremely patient, display constructive approaches and readiness to listen to the other side," Mr. Fedotov said.

Mr. Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, said yesterday that the administration is satisfied that its strategy of making the nuclear issue multilateral, rather than bilateral, is working well.

"It's a tough regime to deal with and heaven knows it's an opaque regime," Miss Rice said in Dallas. "But we're fairly sanguine that if you're going to get this done, it's going to have to be in coordination with other states."

Meanwhile, the North criticized upcoming annual joint war exercises between the United States and South Korea, saying they put in doubt Washington's intent of no hostility.

"The adventurous war game is aimed at steadily intensifying tensions on the Korean peninsula and, eventually, making a pre-emptive attack on [North Korea] and attaining the sinister strategic goal of the U.S. in Northeast Asia," said a statement by the North Korean Foreign Ministry carried by the official KCNA news agency.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20030807-112757-2387r.htm>

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London Times

August 8, 2003

## WMD Team 'Has New Evidence For Dossier'

By Michael Evans, Defence Editor

THE US-led team hunting for evidence of Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programme has now found enough "proof" to produce a dossier of its findings next month, British officials say.

The Iraq Survey Group of up to 1,400 experts and support staff from the United States, Britain and Australia has compiled a list of discoveries, expected to include evidence of a long-term biological weapons programme.

Today's *Economist* magazine claims that British Intelligence is planning to publish its own dossier on the recent findings. The first dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programme was published last September, six months before the invasion of Iraq.

The magazine quoted an "insider" as saying: "We would hope to be able to demonstrate in the fullness of time that almost all the information in last September's dossier was accurate."

However, officials said there was no intention of publishing a separate British dossier.

Last month David Kay, joint head of the Iraq Survey Group, said that "solid evidence" had been uncovered.

After briefing a closed session of members of Congress, Dr Kay said those who doubted whether Iraq had any weapons of mass destruction were in for a surprise. He told reporters after the meeting: "There is solid evidence being produced. We don't intend to expose this evidence until we have full confidence it is solid proof." He said the Iraq Survey Group was getting active co-operation from Iraqis involved in the weapons programme.

"We are, as we speak, involved in sensitive exploitation of sites that we are being led to by Iraqis," he said.

British officials also confirmed that a substantial amount of evidence had emerged recently from interviews with Iraqi scientists of the way in which Saddam had concealed his weapons programme from UN inspectors.

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Los Angeles Times

August 8, 2003

## Iran Rejects Nuclear Allegations

By Associated Press

TEHRAN — Iran on Thursday rejected a report that it was close to building an atomic bomb, insisting that its nuclear program was locally developed merely to produce electricity.

"Allegations that Iran was working with other countries in order to attain nuclear technology are sheer lies," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency.

Asefi was reacting to a report in Monday's Los Angeles Times that Iran "appears to be in the late stages of developing the capacity to build a nuclear bomb."

The Times — citing previously secret reports, international officials, independent experts and Iranian exiles — said Iran has made use of technology and scientists from Russia, North Korea, China and Pakistan to bring it closer to building a bomb than Iraq had been.

"Iran's nuclear technology has been developed by Iranian scientists and is just for civilian and peaceful use," Asefi was quoted as saying. He called The Times' report "irresponsible."

The U.S. has accused Iran of running a clandestine nuclear weapons program and wants the International Atomic Energy Agency to declare Tehran in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

A three-member legal team from the IAEA, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, met Iranian government officials this week to discuss an additional protocol to the treaty that would allow inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities without notice.

President Mohammad Khatami hinted that Iran may sign it "if the world recognizes" his country's right to the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran8aug08.1.3146013.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Washington Times

August 8, 2003

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## Inside The Ring

By Bill Gertz and Rowan Scarborough, The Washington Times

### North Korea split

Below the public facade of near unanimity on policy toward North Korea, the Bush administration's top national security officials are divided on the best way to deal with the North-created nuclear crisis.

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz favor a policy of "regime change" as the ultimate solution. This view, we are told, is based on the almost unanimous intelligence assessment that Pyongyang's communist regime is not going to give up its nuclear arms, regardless of multiparty talks and diplomacy.

The State Department and Secretary of State Colin L. Powell favor the diplomatic approach — even at the expense of concessions to Pyongyang, such as holding bilateral talks.

One solution being considered is to try fomenting a military coup against North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. An idea floating in high-level circles within the administration is to get the Chinese military to lead the way by telling North Korean military leaders that their future is dark as long as Mr. Kim rules.

The coup plan calls for convincing Chinese military leaders to back the North Korean military in ousting Mr. Kim.

In exchange, the new military regime in Pyongyang would be guaranteed its survival for 10 years or so if it gives up the nuclear weapons program.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/inring.htm>

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Christian Science Monitor

August 8, 2003

## As Chemicals Incinerated, Emotions Also Cook

*Army rids itself of leftover weapons of mass destruction, distributing plastic sheeting to Alabamans nearby.*

By Patrik Jonsson, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

ANNISTON, ALA. — What the Army's got buried in the nooks of Alabama's sand hills reads like a twisted tyrant's Christmas wish list: Nearly a million pounds of sarin gas, 1.5 million pounds of VX gas, and about 2 million pounds of mustard gas.

This is the "pink zone," a wooded area around the Anniston Army Depot, home to the caustic leftovers of America's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program. Brought here discreetly in the 1960s, Anniston's stash is about to be incinerated as the US rushes to honor an agreement to neutralize 23,415 tons of rockets and barrels by 2007.

For many in this populous region an hour east of Birmingham, it's high time the Army got rid of chemicals that have been the stuff of legend for 40 years. The overarching sentiment is one of support, an awareness that the Army is trying to fulfill its promise and put toxic weapons to bed as quietly and safely as it can. But some here speak bitterly of a strange irony: Even as the US searches out WMD around the world, they say, it's rarely put so many of its own people at risk.

Now, as a federal judge hears a final injunction request Friday from an environmental group trying to keep the incinerator from starting up, unease besets many, from the commissary to Wellborn Middle School, where a pressurized cafeteria is expected to guard children from any accidental chemical release. In court Friday, critics will argue that the Army has not done enough to protect the area's infirm, and has broken protocols on using the safest technology.

Indeed, as the people of Calhoun County become the first US civilians to be handed gas masks and plastic sheeting, a cauldron of emotions has heated up - and simmered - around Anniston's "toxic burden."

"I've lived in fear for a long time," says County Commissioner J.D. Hess, in line Wednesday for a chemical kit. "But it's 100 times better to finally get rid of this stuff."

Until the 1990s, when plans for the incinerator came to light, many here didn't know about the chemical-weapons stash. "It's not something that people include in the Chamber of Commerce literature" says Suzanne Marshall, a social historian who's studied the incinerator's effect here.

But rumors are plentiful, fanciful - whispers of "killer orchards" where locals fear to tread - and even profitable, with the local restaurant, Area 51 Rumors Grill.

Milton Ford, for one, isn't picking up gas masks - though he can see the incinerator from his barber shop. On his wall are autographed pictures of three-star generals who've visited - for haircuts and to assure him of his safety. Mr. Ford believes them 100 percent: "They say they're ready to burn, so I believe they're ready to burn."

Most here support the incinerator - both for destroying the toxins and for bringing jobs. But there's a palpable disappointment for a town that has been the unwitting stage for America's toxic weapons. Many acknowledge that the Army shared an "innocence" over the dangers of chemicals that were still new and strange when the program was founded. Still, critics say, a lack of forthrightness has tainted the project, shaking confidence in its safety. They argue that the Army has not adequately protected residents - or even considered safer options like underwater neutralization, which is in use at a Maryland site.

"The question [in Anniston] is whether the Army is putting people at risk unnecessarily," says Richard Futrell, a sociology professor at Eastern Kentucky University.

The Army insists that incineration is safe, and points to relative smooth sailing in its destruction of 16 million pounds of chemical weapons in Utah and Johnston Atoll in the South Pacific. But both those locations are remote and sparsely settled: The plume from Johnston Atoll, for instance, rarely blew over populated areas. That's not the case here, where 150,000 residents nestle into the piney sand hills.

Still, Army officials are confident. "We have never hurt anyone," says Mike Abrams, an Anniston Army Depot spokesman - and he doesn't anticipate Erin Brockovich riding into Anniston any time soon. The new high-heat burner will give off no more toxins to those in the pink zone than smoking a pack of cigarettes a year, according to an Army report. And the highest priority, Abrams insists and critics agree, is to neutralize chemicals before rockets and barrels crumble more: There have already been 881 rocket "leakers." Over the past 13 years, the Army spent \$550 million on the plan - from sirens to security plans for schools - which he says would be "criminal" to waste.

Critics worry not just about long-term exposure, but accidents - which, they say, seem plausible and perilous here. Even Abrams admits rare "oopses" - though no serious ones. But fear of that possibility - or at least awareness of it - is clear at a ware-house on Ft. McClellan, where officials are passing out emergency kits with protective hoods and sealing tape. Lines here have grown - and grown. "You just don't know if there's going to be an accident," says Gerald Nowland, a local crane operator picking up a kit with his son.

Ronnie, a potato-chip distributor who lives close enough to the depot fence that he can throw a rock over it, picked up three kits last week and taught his family to use them. He figures they'd survive for three hours in a spill.

Calculations like those are taking their toll. "What we want is compensation for all this, but that's just not happening," he says. His concern is as much with jobs as with safety. "I went looking for a job over there and they were just hiring people from out of state," he says bitterly.

But across the street at Langley's Curb Mart - where browsers can find everything from pickled quails' eggs to John Hersey novels - owner Diane Oliver, like much of Anniston, has made peace with the WMD stash: "We've lived with chemicals all our life. What are you going to do?" Most, like Ms. Oliver, expect the burn to go smoothly. To

many, indeed, the plumes are no worse than exhaust from a pickup cruising by this week, with a bumper sticker that spoke for many: "Build it, burn it, forget it."

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0808/p03s01-uspo.html>

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London Financial Times

August 8, 2003

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## **Saddam's Iraq Would Have Gone Nuclear**

By Curt Mileikowsky and Evelyn Sokolowski

In the debate about the Iraq war and its justification, the all-important question of global security has often been overshadowed by less relevant issues. Whatever the merits of the particular arguments used by the coalition governments to justify the war, it is clear that any other course of action would have endangered global security. Does the failure so far to find weapons of mass destruction prove the war to have been unjustified? It does not. Weapons that used to be the prerogative of a few great powers are now within the reach of unpredictable totalitarian regimes.

This is not just a consequence of the march of technology; also to blame are a flourishing black market in components and knowhow, and the fact that some nations have used international agreements banning WMD as a cover for their clandestine development.

Saddam Hussein took advantage of all these factors. According to Khidhir Hamza, a top scientist in Iraq's nuclear weapons programme and author of *Saddam's Bombmaker*, an early production goal was six nuclear warheads a year. At its peak the programme employed more than 12,000 people.

The first United Nations inspection unit, Unscm, operated in Iraq from 1991 to 1998. Its mission was to destroy weapons that, it was assumed, would be handed over by a defeated and co-operative regime. The reality was rather different.

With an area twice that of Britain, Iraq could easily withhold information from a few hundred inspectors. Through infiltration, bugging and physical threats, it systematically obstructed the UN's efforts.

When Unmovic, Unscm's successor, entered Iraq in November 2002 it faced similar obstacles. Accordingly, its objectives were adjusted: its task was simply to assess the willingness of the regime to co-operate and disarm. Again, the regime did not comply. It is possible that all traces of Iraq's weapons programmes have indeed been destroyed. But that would be at odds with the Iraqi dictator's character and inconsistent with his refusal to co-operate with Unmovic. And, crucially, even if Mr Hussein had destroyed all the weapons and associated hardware, he could still readily have resumed his nuclear weapons programme once the international supervision had ended.

Detailed multi-copy documentation almost certainly still exists. Iraq's weapons construction capacity may also be intertwined with civilian industry in a way that is hard to verify.

The significance of documentation has repeatedly been demonstrated. A striking case is the "parking lot incident" of 1991 when Unscm, thanks to an informant, laid hands on detailed documentation on the nuclear weapons programme. The inspectors were held hostage in their cars under threat for days before being released.

The nuclear weapons Iraq was aiming to produce depend on highly enriched uranium, which may still be available on the black market. Given the documentation from previous work, and the know-how in scientists' heads, the time required to assemble a crude bomb would then be a matter of months.

If the US had yielded to UN pressure to give Unmovic more time, it is unlikely the inspectors would have found significant WMD. The troop concentrations around Iraq would have been dispersed and the pressure on Mr Hussein to co-operate would have diminished accordingly. Ultimately economic sanctions would have been lifted - and a rehabilitated Mr Hussein could have resumed his quest for WMD.

That would have been disastrous for global security. The possibility of links to terrorist groups was one of the weightiest motives for war. Regimes in possession of clandestine WMD must be tempted to use them by proxy, since countermeasures cannot easily be directed against anonymous assailants.

What matters is not whether Iraq's WMD can be tracked down but whether the production of such weapons has been inhibited for the foreseeable future. That required the overthrow of the regime. Preventive wars are not a desirable response to the threat of nuclear proliferation; far better - though very difficult - would be to strengthen the present ineffective mechanisms for preventing proliferation without unacceptably infringing sovereignty. In the meantime the military option may be unavoidable.

*Curt Mileikowsky is former head of Asea's nuclear power division. Evelyn Sokolowski is former head of the joint analysis group for Sweden's nuclear utilities.*

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New York Times  
August 9, 2003  
Pg. 1

## **Iraqi Trailers Said To Make Hydrogen, Not Biological Arms**

By Douglas Jehl

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8 — Engineering experts from the Defense Intelligence Agency have come to believe that the most likely use for two mysterious trailers found in Iraq was to produce hydrogen for weather balloons rather than to make biological weapons, government officials say.

The classified findings by a majority of the engineering experts differ from the view put forward in a white paper made public on May 28 by the C.I.A. and the Defense Intelligence Agency, which said that the trailers were for making biological weapons.

That report had dismissed as a "cover story" claims by senior Iraqi scientists that the trailers were used to make hydrogen for the weather balloons that were then used in artillery practice.

A Defense Department official said the alternative views expressed by members of the engineering team, not yet spelled out in a formal report, had prompted the Defense Intelligence Agency to "pursue additional information" to determine whether those Iraqi claims were indeed accurate.

Officials at the C.I.A. and the Defense Department said today that the two intelligence agencies still stood by the May 28 finding, which President Bush has cited as evidence that Iraq had a biological weapons program. The engineering teams' findings, which officials from the Defense Department and other agencies would discuss only on the condition of anonymity, add a new layer to disputes within the intelligence community about the trailers found by allied forces in Iraq in April and May.

The State Department's intelligence branch, which was not invited to take part in the initial review, disputed the findings in a memorandum on June 2. The fact that American and British intelligence analysts with direct access to the evidence were disputing the claims included in the C.I.A. white paper was first reported in June, along with the analysts' concern that the evaluation of the mobile units had been marred by a rush to judgment.

But it had not previously been known that a majority of the Defense Intelligence Agency's engineering team had come to disagree with the central finding of the white paper: that the trailers were used for making biological weapons.

"The team has decided that in their minds, there could be another use, for inefficient hydrogen production, most likely for balloons," a Defense Department official said.

The Defense Intelligence Agency's engineering teams had not concluded their work in Iraq at the time the white paper was drafted, and so their views were not taken into account at that time, the government officials said. They said the engineering teams had discussed their findings in meetings in Washington in June and again last month.

"We stand by the white paper," the Defense Department official said. "But based on the assessment of the engineering team, it has caused us to pursue additional information about possible alternative uses for the trailers." A C.I.A. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity said the agency was "continuing to gather more information about the labs, but we stand behind the white paper."

Since the white paper was made public in May, new information suggesting that the trailers might have been used for making hydrogen has come from Iraqi officials interrogated by American military officers in Iraq, a military officer said today. Those Iraqi officials have repeated the claims of Iraqi scientists that the trailers were used to fill weather balloons, said the officer, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Another government official from a different agency said the issue of the trailers had prompted deep divisions within the Defense Intelligence Agency. The official said members of the engineering team had been angry that the agency issued the joint white paper with the C.I.A. before their own work was completed.

The official said the question of how that had happened was being examined by the defense agency's inspector general as part of a broader inquiry that began in June.

A spokesman for the intelligence agency, Don Black, said he could not comment on the work of the inspector general.

The Bush administration has said the two trailers are evidence that Saddam Hussein was hiding a program for biological warfare. In the white paper made public in May, it detailed its case even while conceding discrepancies in the evidence and a lack of hard proof.

Senior administration officials have acknowledged that the United States has found neither biological agents nor undisputed evidence that the trailers were used to make such arms. They have said that intelligence analysts in Washington and Baghdad reached their conclusion about the trailers after analyzing, and rejecting, alternative theories of how they could have been used.



That view, described as a consensus of opinion with the C.I.A. and the Defense Intelligence Agency, was presented to the White House before it was made public.

At that time, a senior official who examined the evidence in detail and concluded that the trailers were used for biological weapons said, "The experts who have crawled over this again and again can come up with no other plausible legitimate use."

That official said the agencies had rejected the theory put forward by Iraqi scientists who said one of the units was used to produce hydrogen.

Today, a Defense Department official said of Iraq, "There is not doubt in our minds that they had mobile biological weapons trailers." But the official said there was disagreement within the Defense Intelligence Agency about whether those found so far were used to produce biological weapons or hydrogen.

The engineering team that has come to believe the trailers were used to produce hydrogen includes experts whose task was to assess the trailers from a purely technical standpoint, as opposed to one based on other sources of intelligence. Skeptical experts had previously cited a lack of equipment in the trailers for steam sterilization, normally a prerequisite for any kind of biological production.

Bush administration officials have said the most compelling information that the trailers were used for making biological weapons has come from a human source, an Iraqi scientist who described the trailers and what he said was their weapon-making role to American experts months before the trailers were discovered.

The six-page report that was made public in May, "Iraqi Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants," called discovery of the trailers "the strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program." Senior administration officials have said repeatedly that the White House has not put pressure on the intelligence community in any way on the content of its white paper, or on the timing of its release.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/09/international/worldspecial/09WEAP.html>

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Washington Post

August 10, 2003

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## Depiction Of Threat Outgrew Supporting Evidence

By Barton Gellman and Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writers

His name was Joe, from the U.S. government. He carried 40 classified slides and a message from the Bush administration.

An engineer-turned-CIA analyst, Joe had helped build the U.S. government case that Iraq posed a nuclear threat. He landed in Vienna on Jan. 22 and drove to the U.S. diplomatic mission downtown. In a conference room 32 floors above the Danube River, he told United Nations nuclear inspectors they were making a serious mistake.

At issue was Iraq's efforts to buy high-strength aluminum tubes. The U.S. government said those tubes were for centrifuges to enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb. But the IAEA, the world's nuclear watchdog, had uncovered strong evidence that Iraq was using them for conventional rockets.

Joe described the rocket story as a transparent Iraqi lie. According to people familiar with his presentation, which circulated before and afterward among government and outside specialists, Joe said the specialized aluminum in the tubes was "overspecified," "inappropriate" and "excessively strong." No one, he told the inspectors, would waste the costly alloy on a rocket.

In fact, there was just such a rocket. According to knowledgeable U.S. and overseas sources, experts from U.S. national laboratories reported in December to the Energy Department and U.S. intelligence analysts that Iraq was manufacturing copies of the Italian-made Medusa 81. Not only the Medusa's alloy, but also its dimensions, to the fraction of a millimeter, matched the disputed aluminum tubes.

A CIA spokesman asked that Joe's last name be withheld for his safety, and said he would not be made available for an interview. The spokesman said the tubes in question "are not the same as the Medusa 81" but would not identify what distinguishes them. In an interview, CIA Director George J. Tenet said several different U.S. intelligence agencies believed the tubes could be used to build gas centrifuges for a uranium enrichment program.

The Vienna briefing was one among many private and public forums in which the Bush administration portrayed a menacing Iraqi nuclear threat, even as important features of its evidence were being undermined. There were other White House assertions about forbidden weapons programs, including biological and chemical arms, for which there was consensus among analysts. But the danger of a nuclear-armed Saddam Hussein, more potent as an argument for war, began with weaker evidence and grew weaker still in the three months before war.

This article is based on interviews with analysts and policymakers inside and outside the U.S. government, and access to internal documents and technical evidence not previously made public.

The new information indicates a pattern in which President Bush, Vice President Cheney and their subordinates -- in public and behind the scenes -- made allegations depicting Iraq's nuclear weapons program as more active, more certain and more imminent in its threat than the data they had would support. On occasion administration advocates withheld evidence that did not conform to their views. The White House seldom corrected misstatements or acknowledged loss of confidence in information upon which it had previously relied:

\*Bush and others often alleged that President Hussein held numerous meetings with Iraqi nuclear scientists, but did not disclose that the known work of the scientists was largely benign. Iraq's three top gas centrifuge experts, for example, ran a copper factory, an operation to extract graphite from oil and a mechanical engineering design center at Rashidiya.

\*The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of October 2002 cited new construction at facilities once associated with Iraq's nuclear program, but analysts had no reliable information at the time about what was happening under the roofs. By February, a month before the war, U.S. government specialists on the ground in Iraq had seen for themselves that there were no forbidden activities at the sites.

\*Gas centrifuge experts consulted by the U.S. government said repeatedly for more than a year that the aluminum tubes were not suitable or intended for uranium enrichment. By December 2002, the experts said new evidence had further undermined the government's assertion. The Bush administration portrayed the scientists as a minority and emphasized that the experts did not describe the centrifuge theory as impossible.

\*In the weeks and months following Joe's Vienna briefing, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and others continued to describe the use of such tubes for rockets as an implausible hypothesis, even after U.S. analysts collected and photographed in Iraq a virtually identical tube marked with the logo of the Medusa's Italian manufacturer and the words, in English, "81mm rocket."

\*The escalation of nuclear rhetoric a year ago, including the introduction of the term "mushroom cloud" into the debate, coincided with the formation of a White House Iraq Group, or WHIG, a task force assigned to "educate the public" about the threat from Hussein, as a participant put it.

Two senior policymakers, who supported the war, said in unauthorized interviews that the administration greatly overstated Iraq's near-term nuclear potential.

"I never cared about the 'imminent threat,' " said one of the policymakers, with directly relevant responsibilities.

"The threat was there in [Hussein's] presence in office. To me, just knowing what it takes to have a nuclear weapons program, he needed a lot of equipment. You can stare at the yellowcake [uranium ore] all you want. You need to convert it to gas and enrich it. That does not constitute an imminent threat, and the people who were saying that, I think, did not fully appreciate the difficulties and effort involved in producing the nuclear material and the physics package."

No White House, Pentagon or State Department policymaker agreed to speak on the record for this report about the administration's nuclear case. Answering questions Thursday before the National Association of Black Journalists, national security adviser Condoleezza Rice said she is "certain to this day that this regime was a threat, that it was pursuing a nuclear weapon, that it had biological and chemical weapons, that it had used them." White House officials referred all questions of detail to Tenet.

In an interview and a four-page written statement, Tenet defended the NIE prepared under his supervision in October. In that estimate, U.S. intelligence analysts judged that Hussein was intent on acquiring a nuclear weapon and was trying to rebuild the capability to make one.

"We stand behind the judgments of the NIE" based on the evidence available at the time, Tenet said, and "the soundness and integrity of our process." The estimate was "the product of years of reporting and intelligence collection, analyzed by numerous experts in several different agencies."

Tenet said the time to "decide who was right and who was wrong" about prewar intelligence will not come until the Iraqi Survey Group, the CIA-directed, U.S. military postwar study in Iraq of Hussein's weapons of mass destruction programs is completed. The Bush administration has said this will require months or years.

### **Facts and Doubts**

The possibility of a nuclear-armed Iraq loomed large in the Bush administration's efforts to convince the American public of the need for a preemptive strike. Beginning last August, Cheney portrayed Hussein's nuclear ambitions as a "mortal threat" to the United States. In the fall and winter, Rice, then Bush, marshaled the dreaded image of a "mushroom cloud."

By many accounts, including those of career officials who did not support the war, there were good reasons for concern that the Iraqi president might revive a program to enrich uranium to weapons grade and fabricate a working bomb. He had a well-demonstrated aspiration for nuclear weapons, a proficient scientific and engineering cadre, a history of covert development and a domestic supply of unrefined uranium ore. Iraq was generally believed to have kept the technical documentation for two advanced German centrifuge designs and the assembly diagrams for at least one type of "implosion device," which detonates a nuclear core.

What Hussein did not have was the principal requirement for a nuclear weapon, a sufficient quantity of highly enriched uranium or plutonium. And the U.S. government, authoritative intelligence officials said, had only circumstantial evidence that Iraq was trying to obtain those materials.

But the Bush administration had reasons to imagine the worst. The CIA had faced searing criticism for its failures to foresee India's resumption of nuclear testing in 1998 and to "connect the dots" pointing to al Qaeda's attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Cheney, the administration's most influential advocate of a worst-case analysis, had been powerfully influenced by his experience as defense secretary just after the Persian Gulf War of 1991.

Former National Security Council official Richard A. Clarke recalled how information from freshly seized Iraqi documents disclosed the existence of a "crash program" to build a bomb in 1991. The CIA had known nothing of it. "I can understand why that was a seminal experience for Cheney," Clarke said. "And when the CIA says [in 2002], 'We don't have any evidence,' his reaction is . . . 'We didn't have any evidence in 1991, either. Why should I believe you now?'"

Some strategists, in and out of government, argued that the uncertainty itself -- in the face of circumstantial evidence -- was sufficient to justify "regime change." But that was not what the Bush administration usually said to the American people.

To gird a nation for the extraordinary step of preemptive war -- and to obtain the minimum necessary support from allies, Congress and the U.N. Security Council -- the administration described a growing, even imminent, nuclear threat from Iraq.

### **'Nuclear Blackmail'**

The unveiling of that message began a year ago this week.

Cheney raised the alarm about Iraq's nuclear menace three times in August. He was far ahead of the president's public line. Only Bush and Cheney know, one senior policy official said, "whether Cheney was trying to push the president or they had decided to play good cop, bad cop."

On Aug. 7, Cheney volunteered in a question-and-answer session at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, speaking of Hussein, that "left to his own devices, it's the judgment of many of us that in the not-too-distant future, he will acquire nuclear weapons." On Aug. 26, he described Hussein as a "sworn enemy of our country" who constituted a "mortal threat" to the United States. He foresaw a time in which Hussein could "subject the United States or any other nation to nuclear blackmail."

"We now know that Saddam has resumed his efforts to acquire nuclear weapons," he said. "Among other sources, we've gotten this from firsthand testimony from defectors, including Saddam's own son-in-law."

That was a reference to Hussein Kamel, who had managed Iraq's special weapons programs before defecting in 1995 to Jordan. But Saddam Hussein lured Kamel back to Iraq, and he was killed in February 1996, so Kamel could not have sourced what U.S. officials "now know."

And Kamel's testimony, after defecting, was the reverse of Cheney's description. In one of many debriefings by U.S., Jordanian and U.N. officials, Kamel said on Aug. 22, 1995, that Iraq's uranium enrichment programs had not resumed after halting at the start of the Gulf War in 1991. According to notes typed for the record by U.N. arms inspector Nikita Smidovich, Kamel acknowledged efforts to design three different warheads, "but not now, before the Gulf War."

### **'Educating the Public'**

Systematic coordination began in August, when Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card Jr. formed the White House Iraq Group, or WHIG, to set strategy for each stage of the confrontation with Baghdad. A senior official who participated in its work called it "an internal working group, like many formed for priority issues, to make sure each part of the White House was fulfilling its responsibilities."

In an interview with the New York Times published Sept. 6, Card did not mention the WHIG but hinted at its mission. "From a marketing point of view, you don't introduce new products in August," he said.

The group met weekly in the Situation Room. Among the regular participants were Karl Rove, the president's senior political adviser; communications strategists Karen Hughes, Mary Matalin and James R. Wilkinson; legislative liaison Nicholas E. Calio; and policy advisers led by Rice and her deputy, Stephen J. Hadley, along with I. Lewis Libby, Cheney's chief of staff.

The first days of September would bring some of the most important decisions of the prewar period: what to demand of the United Nations in the president's Sept. 12 address to the General Assembly, when to take the issue to Congress, and how to frame the conflict with Iraq in the midterm election campaign that began in earnest after Labor Day.

A "strategic communications" task force under the WHIG began to plan speeches and white papers. There were many themes in the coming weeks, but Iraq's nuclear menace was among the most prominent.

### **'A Mushroom Cloud'**

The day after publication of Card's marketing remark, Bush and nearly all his top advisers began to talk about the dangers of an Iraqi nuclear bomb.

Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair conferred at Camp David that Saturday, Sept. 7, and they each described alarming new evidence. Blair said proof that the threat is real came in "the report from the International Atomic Energy Agency this morning, showing what has been going on at the former nuclear weapon sites." Bush said "a report came out of the . . . IAEA, that they [Iraqis] were six months away from developing a weapon. I don't know what more evidence we need."

There was no new IAEA report. Blair appeared to be referring to news reports describing curiosity at the nuclear agency about repairs at sites of Iraq's former nuclear program. Bush cast as present evidence the contents of a report from 1996, updated in 1998 and 1999. In those accounts, the IAEA described the history of an Iraqi nuclear weapons program that arms inspectors had systematically destroyed.

A White House spokesman later acknowledged that Bush "was imprecise" on his source but stood by the crux of his charge. The spokesman said U.S. intelligence, not the IAEA, had given Bush his information.

That, too, was garbled at best. U.S. intelligence reports had only one scenario for an Iraqi bomb in six months to a year, premised on Iraq's immediate acquisition of enough plutonium or enriched uranium from a foreign source.

"That is just about the same thing as saying that if Iraq gets a bomb, it will have a bomb," said a U.S. intelligence analyst who covers the subject. "We had no evidence for it."

Two debuts took place on Sept. 8: the aluminum tubes and the image of "a mushroom cloud." A Sunday New York Times story quoted anonymous officials as saying the "diameter, thickness and other technical specifications" of the tubes -- precisely the grounds for skepticism among nuclear enrichment experts -- showed that they were "intended as components of centrifuges."

No one knows when Iraq will have its weapon, the story said, but "the first sign of a 'smoking gun,' they argue, may be a mushroom cloud."

Top officials made the rounds of Sunday talk shows that morning. Rice's remarks echoed the newspaper story. She said on CNN's "Late Edition" that Hussein was "actively pursuing a nuclear weapon" and that the tubes -- described repeatedly in U.S. intelligence reports as "dual-use" items -- were "only really suited for nuclear weapons programs, centrifuge programs."

"There will always be some uncertainty about how quickly he can acquire nuclear weapons," Rice added, "but we don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud."

Anna Perez, a communications adviser to Rice, said Rice did not come looking for an opportunity to say that. "There was nothing in her mind that said, 'I have to push the nuclear issue,'" Perez said, "but Wolf [Blitzer] asked the question."

Powell, a confidant said, found it "disquieting when people say things like mushroom clouds." But he contributed in other ways to the message. When asked about biological and chemical arms on Fox News, he brought up nuclear weapons and cited the "specialized aluminum tubing" that "we saw in reporting just this morning."

Cheney, on NBC's "Meet the Press," also mentioned the tubes and said "increasingly, we believe the United States will become the target" of an Iraqi nuclear weapon. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, on CBS's "Face the Nation," asked listeners to "imagine a September 11th with weapons of mass destruction," which would kill "tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children."

Bush evoked the mushroom cloud on Oct. 7, and on Nov. 12 Gen. Tommy R. Franks, chief of U.S. Central Command, said inaction might bring "the sight of the first mushroom cloud on one of the major population centers on this planet."

### **'Literary License'**

In its initial meetings, Card's Iraq task force ordered a series of white papers. After a general survey of Iraqi arms violations, the first of the single-subject papers -- never published -- was "A Grave and Gathering Danger: Saddam Hussein's Quest for Nuclear Weapons."

Wilkinson, at the time White House deputy director of communications for planning, gathered a yard-high stack of intelligence reports and press clippings.

Wilkinson said he conferred with experts from the National Security Council and Cheney's office. Other officials said Will Tobey and Susan Cook, working under senior director for counterproliferation Robert Joseph, made revisions and circulated some of the drafts. Under the standard NSC review process, they checked the facts.

In its later stages, the draft white paper coincided with production of a National Intelligence Estimate and its unclassified summary. But the WHIG, according to three officials who followed the white paper's progress, wanted gripping images and stories not available in the hedged and austere language of intelligence.

The fifth draft of the paper was obtained by The Washington Post. White House spokesmen dismissed the draft as irrelevant because Rice decided not to publish it. Wilkinson said Rice and Joseph felt the paper "was not strong enough."

The document offers insight into the Bush administration's priorities and methods in shaping a nuclear message. The white paper was assembled by some of the same team, and at the same time, as the speeches and talking points prepared for the president and top officials. A senior intelligence official said last October that the president's speechwriters took "literary license" with intelligence, a phrase applicable to language used by administration officials in some of the white paper's most emotive and misleading assertions elsewhere.

The draft white paper precedes other known instances in which the Bush administration considered the now-discredited claim that Iraq "sought uranium oxide, an essential ingredient in the enrichment process, from Africa." For a speechwriter, uranium was valuable as an image because anyone could see its connection to an atomic bomb. Despite warnings from intelligence analysts, the uranium would return again and again, including the Jan. 28 State of the Union address and three other Bush administration statements that month.

Other errors and exaggerations in public White House claims were repeated, or had their first mention, in the white paper.

Much as Blair did at Camp David, the paper attributed to U.N. arms inspectors a statement that satellite photographs show "many signs of the reconstruction and acceleration of the Iraqi nuclear program." Inspectors did not say that. The paper also quoted the first half of a sentence from a Time magazine interview with U.N. chief weapons inspector Hans Blix: "You can see hundreds of new roofs in these photos." The second half of the sentence, not quoted, was: "but you don't know what's under them."

As Bush did, the white paper cited the IAEA's description of Iraq's defunct nuclear program in language that appeared to be current. The draft said, for example, that "since the beginning of the nineties, Saddam has launched a crash program to divert nuclear reactor fuel for . . . nuclear weapons." The crash program began in late 1990 and ended with the war in January 1991. The reactor fuel, save for waste products, is gone.

#### **'Footnotes and Disclaimers'**

A senior intelligence official said the White House preferred to avoid a National Intelligence Estimate, a formal review of competing evidence and judgments, because it knew "there were disagreements over details in almost every aspect of the administration's case against Iraq." The president's advisers, the official said, did not want "a lot of footnotes and disclaimers."

But Bush needed bipartisan support for war-making authority in Congress. In early September, members of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence began asking why there had been no authoritative estimate of the danger posed by Iraq. Sen. Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) wrote Sept. 9 of his "concern that the views of the U.S. intelligence community are not receiving adequate attention by policymakers in both Congress and the executive branch." When Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.), then committee chairman, insisted on an NIE in a classified letter two days later, Tenet agreed.

Explicitly intended to assist Congress in deciding whether to authorize war, the estimate was produced in two weeks, an extraordinary deadline for a document that usually takes months. Tenet said in an interview that "we had covered parts of all those programs over 10 years through NIEs and other reports, and we had a ton of community product on all these issues."

Even so, the intelligence community was now in a position of giving its first coordinated answer to a question that every top national security official had already answered. "No one outside the intelligence community told us what to say or not to say," Tenet wrote in reply to questions for this article.

The U.S. government possessed no specific information on Iraqi efforts to acquire enriched uranium, according to six people who participated in preparing for the estimate. It knew only that Iraq sought to buy equipment of the sort that years of intelligence reports had said "may be" intended for or "could be" used in uranium enrichment.

Richard J. Kerr, a former CIA deputy director now leading a review of the agency's intelligence analysis about Iraq, said in an interview that the CIA collected almost no hard information about Iraq's weapons programs after the departure of IAEA and U.N. Special Commission, or UNSCOM, arms inspectors during the Clinton administration. He said that was because of a lack of spies inside Iraq.

Tenet took issue with that view, saying in an interview, "When inspectors were pushed out in 1998, we did not sit back. . . . The fact is we made significant professional progress." In his written statement, he cited new evidence on biological and missile programs, but did not mention Hussein's nuclear pursuits.

The estimate's "Key Judgment" said: "Although we assess that Saddam does not yet have nuclear weapons or sufficient material to make any, he remains intent on acquiring them. Most agencies assess that Baghdad started reconstituting its nuclear program about the time that UNSCOM inspectors departed -- December 1998."

According to Kerr, the analysts had good reasons to say that, but the reasons were largely "inferential."

Hussein was known to have met with some weapons physicists, and praised them as "nuclear mujaheddin." But the CIA had "reasonably good intelligence in terms of the general activities and whereabouts" of those scientists, said another analyst with the relevant clearances, and knew they had generally not reassembled into working groups. In a

report to Congress in 2001, the agency could conclude only that some of the scientists "probably" had "continued at least low-level theoretical R&D [research and development] associated with its nuclear program." Analysts knew Iraq had tried recently to buy magnets, high-speed balancing machines, machine tools and other equipment that had some potential for use in uranium enrichment, though no less for conventional industry. Even assuming the intention, the parts could not all be made to fit a coherent centrifuge model. The estimate acknowledged that "we lack specific information on many key aspects" of the program, and analysts presumed they were seeing only the tip of the iceberg.

### **'He Made a Name'**

According to outside scientists and intelligence officials, the most important factor in the CIA's nuclear judgment was Iraq's attempt to buy high-strength aluminum tubes. The tubes were the core evidence for a centrifuge program tied to building a nuclear bomb. Even circumstantially, the CIA reported no indication of uranium enrichment using anything but centrifuges.

That interpretation of the tubes was a victory for the man named Joe, who made the issue his personal crusade. He worked in the gas centrifuge program at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the early 1980s. He is not, associates said, a nuclear physicist, but an engineer whose work involved the platform upon which centrifuges were mounted. At some point he joined the CIA. By the end of the 1990s, according to people who know him casually, he worked in export controls.

Joe played an important role in discovering Iraq's plans to buy aluminum tubes from China in 2000, with an Australian intermediary. U.N. sanctions forbade Iraq to buy anything with potential military applications, and members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, a voluntary alliance, include some forms of aluminum tubing on their list of equipment that could be used for uranium enrichment.

Joe saw the tubes as centrifuge rotors that could be used to process uranium into weapons-grade material. In a gas centrifuge, the rotor is a thin-walled cylinder, open at both ends, that spins at high speed under a magnet. The device extracts the material used in a weapon from a gaseous form of uranium.

In July 2001, about 3,000 tubes were intercepted in Jordan on their way to Iraq, a big step forward in the agency's efforts to understand what Iraq was trying to do. The CIA gave Joe an award for exceptional performance, throwing its early support to an analysis that helped change the agency's mind about Iraq's pursuit of nuclear ambitions.

"He grabbed that information early on, and he made a name for himself," a career U.S. government nuclear expert said.

### **'Stretches the Imagination'**

Doubts about Joe's theory emerged quickly among the government's centrifuge physicists. The intercepted tubes were too narrow, long and thick-walled to fit a known centrifuge design. Aluminum had not been used for rotors since the 1950s. Iraq had two centrifuge blueprints, stolen in Europe, that were far more efficient and already known to work. One used maraging steel, a hard steel alloy, for the rotors, the other carbon fiber.

Joe and his supporters said the apparent drawbacks were part of Iraq's concealment plan. Hussein's history of covert weapons development, Tenet said in his written statement, included "built-in cover stories."

"This is a case where different people had honorable and different interpretations of intentions," said an Energy Department analyst who has reviewed the raw data. "If you go to a nuclear [counterproliferation official] and say I've got these aluminum tubes, and it's about Iraq, his first inclination is to say it's for nuclear use."

But the government's centrifuge scientists -- at the Energy Department's Oak Ridge National Laboratory and its sister institutions -- unanimously regarded this possibility as implausible.

In late 2001, experts at Oak Ridge asked an alumnus, Houston G. Wood III, to review the controversy. Wood, founder of the Oak Ridge centrifuge physics department, is widely acknowledged to be among the most eminent living experts.

Speaking publicly for the first time, Wood said in an interview that "it would have been extremely difficult to make these tubes into centrifuges. It stretches the imagination to come up with a way. I do not know any real centrifuge experts that feel differently."

As an academic, Wood said, he would not describe "anything that you absolutely could not do." But he said he would "like to see, if they're going to make that claim, that they have some explanation of how you do that. Because I don't see how you do it."

A CIA spokesman said the agency does have support for its view from centrifuge experts. He declined to elaborate. In the last week of September, the development of the NIE required a resolution of the running disagreement over the significance of the tubes. The Energy Department had one vote. Four agencies -- with specialties including eavesdropping, maps and foreign military forces -- judged that the tubes were part of a centrifuge program that could be used for nuclear weapons. Only the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research joined the judgment of the Energy Department. The estimate, as published, said that "most analysts" believed the tubes were suitable and intended for a centrifuge cascade.

Majority votes make poor science, said Peter D. Zimmerman, a former chief scientist at the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

"In this case, the experts were at Z Division at Livermore [Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory] and in DOE intelligence here in town, and they were convinced that no way in hell were these likely to be centrifuge tubes," he said.

Tenet said the Department of Energy was not the only agency with experts on the issue; the CIA consulted military battlefield rocket experts, as well as its own centrifuge experts.

### **Unravelings**

On Feb. 5, two weeks after Joe's Vienna briefing, Powell gave what remains the government's most extensive account of the aluminum tubes, in an address to the U.N. Security Council. He did not mention the existence of the Medusa rocket or its Iraqi equivalent, though he acknowledged disagreement among U.S. intelligence analysts about the use of the tubes.

Powell's CIA briefers, using data originating with Joe, told him that Iraq had "overspecified" requirements for the tubes, increasing expense without making them more useful to rockets. That helped persuade Powell, a confidant said, that Iraq had some other purpose for the tubes.

"Maybe Iraqis just manufacture their conventional weapons to a higher standard than we do, but I don't think so," Powell said in his speech. He said different batches "seized clandestinely before they reached Iraq" showed a "progression to higher and higher levels of specification, including in the latest batch an anodized coating on extremely smooth inner and outer surfaces. . . . Why would they continue refining the specification, go to all that trouble for something that, if it was a rocket, would soon be blown into shrapnel when it went off?"

An anodized coating is actually a strong argument for use in rockets, according to several scientists in and out of government. It resists corrosion of the sort that ruined Iraq's previous rocket supply. To use the tubes in a centrifuge, experts told the government, Iraq would have to remove the anodized coating.

Iraq did change some specifications from order to order, the procurement records show, but there is not a clear progression to higher precision. One tube sample was rejected because its interior was unfinished, too uneven to be used in a rocket body. After one of Iraq's old tubes got stuck in a launcher and exploded, Baghdad's subsequent orders asked for more precision in roundness.

U.S. and European analysts said they had obtained records showing that Italy's Medusa rocket has had its specifications improved 10 times since 1978. Centrifuge experts said in interviews that the variations had little or no significance for uranium enrichment, especially because the CIA's theory supposes Iraq would do extensive machining to adapt the tubes as rotors.

For rockets, however, the tubes fit perfectly. Experts from U.S. national labs, working temporarily with U.N. inspectors in Iraq, observed production lines for the rockets at the Nasser factory north of Baghdad. Iraq had run out of body casings at about the time it ordered the aluminum tubes, according to officials familiar with the experts' reports. Thousands of warheads, motors and fins were crated at the assembly lines, awaiting the arrival of tubes.

"Most U.S. experts," Powell asserted, "think they are intended to serve as rotors in centrifuges used to enrich uranium." He said "other experts, and the Iraqis themselves," said the tubes were really for rockets.

Wood, the centrifuge physicist, said "that was a personal slam at everybody in DOE," the Energy Department. "I've been grouped with the Iraqis, is what it amounts to. I just felt that the wording of that was probably intentional, but it was also not very kind. It did not recognize that dissent can exist."

*Staff writers Glenn Kessler, Dana Priest and Richard Morin and staff researchers Lucy Shackelford, Madonna Lebling and Robert Thomason contributed to this report.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A39500-2003Aug9.html>

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National Journal  
August 9, 2003  
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## **The Pros And Cons Of New Nuclear Weapons**

By James Kitfield

Even as anti-nuke demonstrators were organizing protests around the country to commemorate the early-August anniversaries of the U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the U.S. Strategic Command held a little-publicized meeting of senior Bush administration officials on August 6 and 7 to advance plans for a new generation of nuclear arms. Proponents of the plan argue that the United States needs to tailor smaller, bunker-buster nukes in order to threaten underground nuclear facilities that may be built by such nations as North Korea and Iran.

Opponents counter that manufacturing a new generation of nuclear weapons will deal a severe blow to the

international arms-control regime and break down the firewall separating nuclear and conventional arms, leading to greater nuclear proliferation and the increased possibility of a nuclear war. What both sides agree on, however, is that nuclear proliferation is emerging as the single greatest threat to U.S. national security, and that America is at a crossroads in determining how to deal with it.

In recent interviews, National Journal correspondent James Kitfield spoke with leading voices on both sides of the argument. C. Paul Robinson is director of Sandia National Laboratories, one of the nation's three primary nuclear weapons labs, and a former chief negotiator at the U.S.-U.S.S.R. Nuclear Testing Talks in Geneva during the 1980s. Joseph Cirincione is director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, and a co-author of *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Following are edited excerpts of their separate interviews.

**NJ: The one point of agreement that emerges in the debate about the Bush administration's 2002 Nuclear Posture Review is that the fundamental equation of nuclear deterrence has been forever altered by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the proliferation of nuclear technology, and the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Is that a fair assumption?**

Robinson: Deterrence has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War, and we're still sorting out what that means for our nuclear posture and the future. As Russia becomes more of a friend than an enemy, we are no longer confronted with a nation that threatens our very existence. I spent many sleepless nights during the Cold War worrying about stability matrixes and first-strike, "use-them-or-lose-them" calculations. That kind of Armageddon scenario is now a distant worry.

I still worry, however, about the proliferation of nuclear materials and technologies from Russia, because in many respects it's a Third World nation now, and in the Third World everything is for sale. I regret that as a nation we haven't been bolder in developing a Marshall Plan for Russia that would help it reach at least a minimum level of prosperity, which is the best antidote to that kind of proliferation. That problem is related, in turn, to what I believe is our greatest emerging threat -- rogue states armed with nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction.

**NJ: Given such seismic events as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the September 11 terror attacks, doesn't it make sense to re-evaluate our strategic ability to deter aggression?**

Cirincione: Absolutely, and we should be taking a new look at our deterrence posture. But it's important for people to understand that this is not what the Bush administration is doing. The January 2002 Nuclear Posture Review directed the departments of Energy and Defense to begin development of new nuclear weapons, and to formulate new policies to accommodate such weapons. As a result, the nuclear weapons labs have re-established advanced-warhead concept teams to explore modifications of existing weapons, and to develop low-yield weapons and nuclear earth-penetrators that can be used against hardened targets. So the Bush administration has already decided that we need new nuclear weapons, and they are now going ahead implementing policies to reach that goal step by step. They understand that this is a very controversial decision, however, so they have adopted "salami" tactics -- they are slicing off a little bit at a time.

**NJ: Are the labs developing new nuclear weapons?**

Robinson: That depends on how you define "new." If we take a warhead off the shelf that we designed and tested in the past, and then put it on a new delivery vehicle, is that a new nuclear weapon? We will probably have to manufacture new copies because we produced only a few originally, but it is not a new design, nor will we need to test it. I can categorically state that no one is proposing returning to nuclear testing.

The main point is that the world is not static. Over the past decade, nations have gone to school on our conventional military capabilities, and many of them have adopted a strategy of moving their high-value targets out of our reach by locating them in deeply buried tunnels and inside mountains. If you want to know who the main culprits are, just look at which nations are buying these huge tunnel-boring machines. You'll find that North Korea, Iran, Syria, and Libya have all built a lot of underground facilities. We keep having to relearn this lesson that the world is not stupid, and potential adversaries will constantly take actions to better their strategic position and counter our strengths. I would argue that the United States must respond by maintaining a robust deterrent against whatever is hidden in those underground facilities.

**NJ: Does the United States need a low-yield, nuclear bunker-buster to hold an enemy's underground facilities at risk?**

Cirincione: This argument that we need mini-nukes as earth penetrators is based on a lie. Every independent study done on this issue has concluded that for any target buried more than 50 yards underground, you would still need a very large nuclear warhead. Mini-nukes of a kiloton or less just don't get the job done. The big nukes you would need in order to reach a truly deep underground bunker, meanwhile, would kick up so much dirt that you would have a major problem with radioactive fallout.

More to the point, there are multiple ways of attacking underground facilities using conventional weapons that would be more effective. With repeated precision strikes using conventional earth-penetrating bombs, you can bore



deeper and deeper until you reach your target. You could use high-temperature thermo-baric weapons that have the advantage of destroying biological and chemical agents and pathogens. You could use precision-strike or Special Operations forces to seal the exit and entrance tunnels to an underground facility.

**NJ: Are there viable conventional alternatives to nuclear bunker-busters?**

Robinson: Our primary focus is still to accomplish this with conventional weapons, and we work hard on that problem. Nuclear weapons remain a blunt instrument of last resort. We've conducted more than 4,000 penetrator tests at Sandia since the 1960s, however, and we have a lot of data on the problem. Basically our tests show that conventional penetrators don't work very well. In the aftermath of the bombing campaign against Serbia, for instance, we discovered that we did very little to no damage against buried targets.

So if we can find ways to strike these buried targets with conventional weapons, we will. If we can't, however, we need to look at what can be accomplished with a nuclear earth-penetrator that causes the least possible amount of collateral damage. That leads you away from two-stage, thermo-nuclear weapons to smaller-yield, lighter weapons with high reliability. A national command authority confronted in a crisis with the prospect of killing 40,000 people with a thermo-nuclear weapon in order to take out a bunker is probably going to decide not to. If we could design a bunker-buster that would kill an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 people, on the other hand, the answer would probably be yes if the situation was critical. Those are the weapons the Bush administration gave us the OK to begin researching about a year ago, because our scientists felt handcuffed by restrictions that were in place at the time.

**NJ: Would rogue nations be deterred from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, or building underground bunkers, if they knew their facilities could be reached by nuclear earth-penetrators?**

Cirincione: The Bush administration has adopted this arrogant attitude that the United States can take the dramatic step of developing these weapons, and there will be no international repercussions or imitators. If the most powerful nation the world has ever known says it needs a new class of nuclear weapon to defend itself against weapons of mass destruction, however, why don't other countries also need them? Why doesn't Iran, which has actually been attacked by chemical weapons?

The real danger of this concept is that it blurs the lines between nuclear and conventional weapons, making nukes just another tool in the toolbox that could be used for tactical battlefield purposes. In that sense, this argument is less about deterrence than war fighting. We already have plenty of doomsday weapons in our arsenal if all we're trying to do is scare people. They are planning on using these weapons. And if the United States were to use them, it would cross a threshold that has not been breached since the Truman administration. That in turn would encourage other nations to develop and use nuclear weapons in a similar manner. That's not in the United States' national security interests. Given that we have never accepted a nuclear weapon into our arsenal without testing -- with the exception of the Hiroshima bomb -- the path the Bush administration is on also greatly increases the likelihood that the United States will return to nuclear testing, which would be a terrible blow to the nonproliferation regime.

**NJ: Will developing a nuclear bunker-buster likely lead to new testing?**

Robinson: I don't think we will need new testing, because the warhead we are talking about has already been tested. As I said earlier, we would need to start production of new warheads again.

I continue to abide by my statements that we're a long way from going back to nuclear tests. Having said that, I helped write the safeguards that were written into the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ratification protocols, which essentially stated that the president of the United States would withdraw from the treaty and return to testing if a serious problem developed in the U.S. nuclear arsenal that required testing for a solution. The point I'm making is, the United States has been willing to abide by these treaties only as long as they do not conflict with our essential security posture.

**NJ: How do you respond to arms control experts who charge that remanufacturing a new class of nuclear bunker-busters violates the Nonproliferation Treaty, which commits the United States to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race" and "to nuclear disarmament?"**

Robinson: I was in the Reagan administration when we debated what exactly was meant by Article VI of the NPT, and it seems to me that the end state of total nuclear disarmament that the treaty envisions will occur around the same time that the lamb lies down with the lion. And I always argued that even at that point, the lamb still won't get much sleep.

In truth, I believe that the NPT was intended more as a confidence-building measure than as a real arms control treaty that we were willing to bet our country's survival on. We would never have negotiated an arms control treaty with the ridiculous verification inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency prescribed in the NPT, which missed the programs in Iraq and Iran and even Israel. Where has the IAEA spent the most money in terms of inspections? In Germany, Canada, and Japan. Why? Because it is a confidence-building measure among friendly countries eager to prove they are not violating it. It was never set up to catch cheaters. That's why I disagree with people who infer that the NPT is a real arms control treaty. It's not.

**NJ: Is the NPT more a gentlemen's agreement than an arms control treaty?**

Cirincione: That's just nonsense. President Bush just negotiated a treaty on strategic nuclear weapons with Moscow that has no verification regime, yet he still insists that it's vital to our national security. The NPT was the beginning of what became a comprehensive, interlocking network of treaties, agreements, and enforcement mechanisms designed to stop the proliferation of not only nuclear weapons, but also chemical and biological weapons. It established a legal and diplomatic framework for a non-nuclear future, and it has worked. Instead of the 20 to 25 nuclear nations that President John F. Kennedy predicted, we now have eight worldwide. That's still eight too many, but that's not a bad track record.

As the nuclear states continue to move toward ever-smaller arsenals as called for in the NPT, we will continue to devalue nuclear weapons globally. That's the whole crux of the matter: Given our overwhelming conventional military superiority, the United States is more secure in a world where nuclear weapons are devalued and dwindling as opposed to a world where we and others are developing new nuclear weapons for new uses.

Now, there are certainly enforcement problems with the nonproliferation regime, as there are with all international and national laws. Does that automatically mean the laws are useless? No, it means we need to get better at enforcement and adapting them to new circumstances. There's no question that we need to toughen IAEA inspections and to take a fresh look at some of the fundamental tenets of the nonproliferation regime. Some people in the Bush administration think the first thing you do in such a circumstance is tear down the bridge you're standing on. I argue instead that we need to strengthen the bridge.

**NJ: Do you credit the NPT for slowing the march of nuclear proliferation?**

Robinson: I think the North Atlantic Treaty extending our nuclear umbrella to our European allies did much more to prevent nations from going nuclear than the NPT, and will do more in the future as more Eastern European nations join NATO. That's why I argue that we should also extend that umbrella further from Japan to encompass Southeast Asian nations such as South Korea, Thailand, Singapore, and the Philippines.

**NJ: Do you ever worry that the United States' aggressive strategy of pre-emption, coupled with our overwhelming conventional military capability, might convince some nations that nuclear weapons are their only deterrent against us?**

Robinson: The National Security Strategy lays out very carefully the conditions that might prompt pre-emption, which are basically limited to those instances when the threat of many American deaths is imminent and you have the nexus of rogue states with weapons of mass destruction and links to terrorists. Having said that, a friend of mine recently pointed out that the United States was not deterred from going to war by Iraq's supposed arsenal of chemical and biological weapons. We haven't responded nearly as quickly to North Korea's announcement that it has nuclear weapons. Some people could draw the lesson that the United States can be deterred by nuclear weapons, but not by chemical or biological ones. I can't argue with that conclusion.

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August 10, 2003  
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## **Accused Scientist Says Letter Links To Anthrax Mailers**

*FBI denied his access to document but said it's unrelated to mailings*

By Guy Taylor, The Washington Times

The FBI won't release an anonymous letter, which in the days before the 2001 fatal anthrax mailings, accused an Egyptian-born scientist of plotting biowarfare against the United States, saying it would divulge secret sources in the continuing investigation.

In a July 7 note citing the sources, the FBI denied Ayaad Assaad, the letter's subject, access to the evidence. Mr. Assaad said he's convinced it is linked to a person or a group responsible for the anthrax mailings that killed five persons.

"They know damn well that this letter is connected to the anthrax sender," he said, adding that the FBI's refusal to provide a copy suggests "they're trying to protect whoever sent it."

He said he suspects it led investigators to the Army's biodefense lab at Fort Detrick.

Asked about the anonymous letter Friday, a spokeswoman at the FBI's Washington field office said it is "unrelated to the anthrax mailings."

However, that assertion hasn't stopped the bureau from withholding it for nearly two years from Mr. Assaad. According to the July 7 note to him, in which the Justice Department denied his latest request for a copy of the letter, releasing it "could reasonably be expected to disclose the identities of confidential sources and information by such sources."

About two weeks before the anthrax mailings became known, the FBI was given the unsigned letter describing Mr. Assaad, who once worked at Fort Detrick, as an anti-American religious fanatic with the means and expertise to unleash a bioweapons attack.

He has been seeking a copy of the letter ever since agents with the FBI's Washington field office questioned him about it on Oct. 3, 2001.

The Hartford Courant first reported the FBI's continued refusal to release it last month. During an interview with The Washington Times on Thursday, Mr. Assaad said he's baffled by what he calls the FBI's contradictory actions. "They're trying to protect someone who hurt me," he said, explaining that from what he saw of the letter it was laden with false and negative statements about him. While it didn't specify his religion, he said it called him a "religious fanatic."

Mr. Assaad, who holds graduate degrees from Iowa State University and has lived in the United States since the mid-1970s, claims he was discriminated against when he worked at the Army's Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick. He now works as a toxicologist for the Environmental Protection Agency. He said when the FBI questioned him about the anonymous letter, agents told him he could file a Freedom of Information-Privacy Acts request to get a copy of it. When the interview was completed, the agents cleared him and said he was free to go.

However, he said when he made repeated calls to the FBI asking if agents wanted to speak with him again or if his past work with bioweapons could assist in their investigation, he was turned away.

Meanwhile, he said, the FBI had given him a wrong case number for filing the request to obtain a copy of the letter. FBI agents recently were seen near Fort Detrick unsuccessfully squishing through the muck at the bottom of a drained pond in search of evidence in the anthrax mailings. They reportedly were hunting for something tangible to connect the anthrax mailings to scientist Steven Hatfill, whom authorities have called a "person of interest" in the case.

No charges have been filed against Mr. Hatfill, but investigators who searched his apartment twice last year are said to have him under 24-hour surveillance.

Mr. Hatfill denies involvement in the anthrax mailings. He worked at Fort Detrick for two years, until 1999, before taking a job with defense contractor Science Applications International Corp., where he worked as a senior scientist until March 2002.

According to a report last month in The New York Times, he was involved in building mock biological weapons labs to train special operations personnel on what to look for in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20030809-110412-5744r.htm>

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