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Articles & Other Documents:

[Officials Say Bush Seeks \\$600 Million To Hunt Iraq Arms](#)

[North Korea Says Nuclear Fuel Rods Processed](#)

[Iran Names Panel On Nuclear Inspections](#)

[Heavy Metal Lightly Guarded In Niger](#)

[Search in Iraq Finds No Banned Weapons](#)

[N. Korea Claims Nuclear Advance](#)

[Pakistan Test Fires Nuclear-Capable Missile](#)

[Nuclear Waiting Game Called Risky](#)

[Putin Beefs Up ICBM Capacity](#)

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New York Times
October 2, 2003
Pg. 1

Officials Say Bush Seeks \$600 Million To Hunt Iraq Arms

By James Risen and Judith Miller

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1 — The Bush administration is seeking more than \$600 million from Congress to continue the hunt for conclusive evidence that Saddam Hussein's government had an illegal weapons program, officials said Wednesday.

The money, part of the White House's request for \$87 billion in supplemental spending on Iraq and Afghanistan, comes on top of at least \$300 million that has already been spent on the weapons search, the officials said.

The budget figures for the weapons search are included in the classified part of the administration's supplemental appropriations request, and have not been made public. The size of the request suggests the White House is determined to keep searching for unconventional weapons or evidence that they were being developed under Mr. Hussein. The search so far has turned up no solid evidence that Iraq had chemical, biological or nuclear weapons when the American invasion began in March, according to administration officials.

Counting the money already spent, the total price tag for the search will approach \$1 billion.

The money is intended specifically to pay for the activities of the Iraq Survey Group, made up of teams of troops and experts who are managed by the Pentagon but whose activities are coordinated by David Kay, a former United Nations weapons inspector who reports to the director of central intelligence, George J. Tenet.

Officials said the money for the Iraq Survey Group comes under the classified intelligence part of the Pentagon's budget request. A Pentagon spokesman declined to comment on the classified category.

The request for increased funding comes just as Mr. Kay is scheduled to brief Congress in closed sessions on Thursday on an interim report of the Iraq Survey Group's findings so far.

He is to testify before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The C.I.A. is expected to publicly release a declassified statement based on Mr. Kay's testimony after the briefings, officials said.

C.I.A. and other officials said last week that Mr. Kay's report would be inconclusive, suggesting that he will not say that he has found strong evidence of the existence of illegal weapons in Iraq.

Since the fall of the Hussein government, the failure to find evidence of illegal weapons has been a major political embarrassment for the Bush administration.

After the initial military-led effort to find such weapons came under fire, President Bush turned to the C.I.A. to oversee an expanded search. In June, Mr. Tenet asked Mr. Kay to act as his personal adviser on the issue and to provide strategic advice to the weapons hunters.

Officials familiar with the request said that if the administration gets all the money it is seeking, it will provide funding for a staff of 1,400 for the Iraq Survey Group. It currently has more than 1,200 members.

The cash infusion is being sought even though the group has gotten off to what experts and military officials said had been a rocky start.

Though a larger group than the 75th Exploitation Task Force, the military weapons hunting group that preceded it, the Iraq Survey group includes many members drawn from reserve units.

Some weapons hunting units have sat in Baghdad for days, sometimes weeks, waiting for missions, officials say.

"Even when hot tips have come in, it often takes days to mobilize a unit to visit a suspect site or talk to a suspect scientist," said a former member of one unit, who spoke on condition that he not be identified.

The Iraq Survey Group has also been slow to mobilize former international arms inspectors who had volunteered to accompany the Exploitation Task Force and the Iraq Survey Group, those inspectors say.

"Most of us have just given up waiting and gone on with our lives," said one former weapons inspector, who was told he would be sent to Baghdad.

The group has also concentrated on installing an unnecessarily elaborate infrastructure to support its operations, said several military officials who complained there was a disparity between the resources allotted to the two programs.

While the Exploitation Task Force worked out of an abandoned palace and the servants' housing quarters near Baghdad airport and remained short of vehicles, air support, computers and even electricity during the initial months of the weapons hunt, the Iraq Survey Group spent its first weeks installing air-conditioned trailers, a new dining facility, state-of-the-art software and even a sprinkler system for a new lawn, according to officials and experts who worked with the group this summer.

"They kept unloading crates and crates of new Dell laptops," said one Pentagon official who complained that the exploitation force lacked resources.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/02/politics/02WEAP.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

October 2, 2003

North Korea Says Nuclear Fuel Rods Processed

By Reuters

BEIJING, Thursday, Oct. 2 — Raising the stakes in a nuclear standoff, North Korea has said for the first time it has processed spent fuel rods that could be used to make nuclear bombs but will not export its atomic capabilities.

The remarks by Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su-hon mark a major step in reclusive North Korea's nuclear program since the rods can provide plutonium to make fissile material and had been sealed under a 1994 agreement with the United States.

North Korea had processed its 8,000 fuel rods and "changed the purpose of these fuel rods," China's Xinhua news agency quoted Choe as telling reporters at the United Nations in New York. He did not state the purpose, but such reprocessing would result in fissile material useable to make nuclear weapons.

The North's foreign ministry, in a report carried by the official KCNA news agency, echoed that revelation and said Pyongyang could do more.

"We will reprocess more spent fuel rods to be churned out in an unbroken chain from the 5 mw (megawatt) nuclear reactor in Yongbyon without delay when we deem it necessary," it quoted a spokesman as saying.

The statements follow a tried and tested pattern used by the reclusive communist state to force concessions from the United States, and is timely as the two tiptoe around when and how to hold another round of international talks on the crisis.

Choe's comment was a diplomatic ploy aimed at forcing the United States into an offer, said Yu Suk-ryul, professor at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security in Seoul.

Choe played down the chance of a new round of international talks on his country's nuclear program, but a senior South Korean official said Pyongyang was prepared to attend six-way talks and brushed off a string of comments to the contrary by Pyongyang as a diplomatic tactic.

"We have no intention of transferring any means of that nuclear deterrence to other countries," Choe told reporters at the North's mission to the United Nations in New York.

Washington has been anxious about whether reclusive North Korea has a nuclear weapon since it said a year ago it possessed enriched uranium and this year expelled U.N. inspectors, pulled out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and took its Yongbyon plant, where the rods are stored, out of mothballs.

STRENGTHENING DETERRENCE

U.S. officials have voiced fears North Korea might try to export its nuclear technology and say it could already have one or two nuclear devices.

The reprocessing of 8,000 rods could yield enough material to create 20 nuclear bombs, Yu said, adding that North Korea did not have sufficient technical expertise to make that many devices.

"Considering the technological level at North Korean facilities they will probably be able to produce five or six nuclear bombs in about six months," Yu said.

Choe refused to disclose the scale of Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal, Xinhua said. "One thing we can tell you is that we are in possession of nuclear deterrence and we're continuing to strengthen that deterrence."

His remarks came as the United States and key Asian allies try to persuade Pyongyang to hold another round of six-way talks to resolve the tense deadlock.

Choe said his country had made no promises to participate in a second round of the talks, which also involve China, Russia, the United States, Japan and South Korea. The first round took place in Beijing in August.

"Certain mass media is circulating rumors as though we have just made promises to participate in the next round of the six-party talks," Choe said. "Unfortunately, this is not true."

Masao Okonogi, a Korea expert at Keio University in Tokyo said Choe's comments were a sign talks could be on the horizon.

"The comments about not transferring (nuclear weapons) are something they have started to say after the six-way talks and can be seen as a sign they are giving consideration to U.S. concerns," he said.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, Washington's pointman on North Korea, said this week the United States and its allies were urging Pyongyang to return to the table and a round of talks in November was a possibility.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/02/international/asia/02KORE.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times

October 2, 2003

Iran Names Panel On Nuclear Inspections

By New York Times

TEHRAN, Oct. 1 — Iran has appointed a five-member team to decide the country's policy toward an Oct. 31 deadline that the United Nations nuclear agency has set for it to permit closer inspection of its nuclear activities, the daily newspaper Entekhab reported Wednesday.

The paper said the team would most likely agree to closer inspections but would insist that Iran be allowed to continue its nuclear and enrichment programs and that military centers be excluded from the sites open to inspectors. The team includes the foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi; the minister of information, Ali Yunessi; the defense minister, Ali Shamkhani; the secretary of the high national security council, Hassan Rowhani; and the supreme religious leader's adviser for international affairs, Ali Velayati.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has urged Iran to sign an additional protocol by Oct. 31 that would allow intensive, unannounced inspections of all its nuclear sites. There are concerns that Iran is using its sites to make nuclear weapons, a contention that Iran has denied.

Foreign diplomats said last week that inspectors had found traces of highly enriched uranium in the environmental samples taken at the Kalaye site in Tehran.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/02/international/middleeast/02IRAN.html>

Washington Times
October 2, 2003
Pg. 15

Heavy Metal Lightly Guarded In Niger

By Bruce Stanley, Associated Press

NIAMEY, Niger — A convoy of flatbed trucks loaded with drums of mined uranium heads south two or three times each week from the Sahara Desert in Niger on a 10-day journey to the port of Cotonou in neighboring Benin.

Two lightly armed Nigerien gendarmes accompany the tarp-covered trucks on their 1,240-mile trip. They have no satellite phones or other ways to communicate in case of trouble. On their prearranged stops for the night, the drivers must notify the mining companies, but they take no special precautions to secure the drums against theft.

This low-grade security for the powder that can be processed into high-grade uranium for nuclear bombs provides a snapshot of how the world's second-poorest country manages radioactive materials — management under closer scrutiny since the Bush administration accused Iraq of trying to buy uranium here.

A U.N. nuclear agency team plans to visit Niger in the coming months, hoping to speed government approval of an agreement that would permit in-depth monitoring of uranium exports, the Associated Press learned while investigating the country's uranium trade.

Without this safeguards agreement, the International Atomic Energy Agency can't require Niger to tighten security and has no authority to inspect production or shipments.

Niger produces lightly processed uranium, or yellowcake — the raw material for enriched uranium used as fuel for nuclear reactors or an atomic bomb.

Few safeguards

Despite global fears that terrorists or so-called rogue nations could acquire ingredients for a bomb, the U.N. agency doesn't see Niger as a major risk.

Its yellowcake "would require considerable conversion and processing to be usable for nuclear weapons," agency spokesman Mark Gwozdecky said. "We don't start tracking this stuff until it's in a form suitable for reactor fuel."

The IAEA, based in Vienna, Austria, instead relies on the governments of countries that import uranium shipments from Niger to report to the agency as obligated under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Some analysts say this isn't enough.

"There are loopholes," said Larry Scheinman, who was assistant director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in the Clinton administration. "It's important to be able to know the transaction flows with respect to yellowcake."

Companies trading in yellowcake should be required to report all significant shipments so that the IAEA can track where the material is going, said Tom Cochrane, director of the nuclear program at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a Washington-based advocacy group.

The French company Cogema, the biggest shareholder in Niger's uranium mines, says it reports its shipments "systematically," but this notification is voluntary under current rules.

Even the skeptics acknowledge that U.N. watchdogs lack the money to monitor yellowcake as rigorously as they track more highly radioactive materials.

Niger has signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but of the 22 countries reporting production of uranium in 2000, Niger and Kazakhstan are the only ones without a safeguards agreement.

"The pressure has to be put on them to do it quickly," said Mr. Scheinman, who now works at the Center for Non-Proliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in Washington.

Niger's parliament must ratify the agreement and enact any corresponding laws, and the specialists and lawyers who will travel to Niger aim "to break any legal logjam," said Mr. Gwozdecky, the IAEA spokesman. Their trip is part of a planned IAEA mission to five West African countries and six in Latin America.

Iraq connection

Before starting the war against Iraq, the United States and Britain caused a diplomatic uproar by claiming that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had tried to buy yellowcake here to build a nuclear arsenal.

An Iraq-Niger connection already existed. Iraq is known to have bought 305 tons of Nigerien yellowcake for its nuclear weapons program around 1981 and 1982, and 5 tons can yield enough enriched uranium to build a bomb using basic Chinese technology.

But that was 20 years ago.

This year's claims related to recent reported sales, but Washington backed off its accusations after incriminating documents proved to be forgeries. Yet Britain, citing undisclosed intelligence, maintained that Iraq was seeking uranium in Niger.

Niger denies the accusations, and AP interviews with independent analysts and businessmen who mine and export yellowcake here add weight to the denial.

Except for authorized shipments from the country's two mines, "we haven't sold a single gram of uranium to anyone," said Oumarou Hamadou, secretary-general of Niger's Ministry of Mines and Energy. "We are tired, tired, tired," he said. "When someone accuses us of something that's not true, it hurts."

Neino Inoua, head of the Nigerien National Union of Mine Workers, is among Nigeriens still angered by the accusations. "Niger is innocent of these accusations," he said, slamming his hands down on his desk.

In 1985, Niger stopped selling uranium except through the mining companies after cheaper production from Canada made its ore less competitive.

Low toxicity

Yellowcake is low in radioactivity. Some authorities say it poses a health risk only if ingested, in which case its toxicity is little different from that of lead, mercury or zinc.

So yellowcake probably wouldn't be a suitable component of a "dirty bomb" that uses a conventional explosive to spread radiation, analysts say.

"It's not going to kill large numbers of people if it goes off in a device like that, but dirty bombs are more about inflicting terror," said Stephen Schwartz, publisher of the Chicago-based nonprofit Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Some analysts suggest that any thief — or country — considering hijacking large quantities of uranium in Niger would face a Herculean task, given the rudimentary transportation links and the sheer weight and bulk of yellowcake.

Each loaded drum weighs about half a ton on average. It would take nine barrels of Nigerien yellowcake to yield enough enriched uranium for a bomb. The IAEA acknowledges that such an amount could go missing, but insists it keeps close tabs on countries capable of converting yellowcake into weapons-grade uranium.

Still, the transportation of yellowcake in Niger appears somewhat less secure than in at least two other countries that produce uranium.

Canada's Cameco Corp. trucks yellowcake 2,175 miles from its mines in northern Saskatchewan to processing plants at Blind River, Ontario. The trailers are fully enclosed and sealed, and drivers maintain constant radio contact. In Namibia in southern Africa, London-based Rio Tinto PLC loads yellowcake drums into freight containers at the mine, fastens the containers with tamper-proof seals and loads them onto rail cars for a six-hour trip to Walvis Bay, where they are stacked door against door to prevent theft.

Somair, the joint venture operating the older of Niger's two uranium mines, is considering using freight containers as well, but faces "cost and logistics problems," said a senior company manager, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Room for improvement

In Niger, trucks of yellowcake lumber along one of the country's few paved roads at a top speed of about 40 miles an hour, their cargoes of blue barrels drawing little attention in the dusty towns where their drivers stop at night.

Two Nigerien gendarmes accompany the cargoes to the border with Benin, whose police then escort them to the Atlantic. Sometimes the drums are transferred to trains at the Benin city of Parakou to complete the journey.

Niger is a former French colony, and its uranium industry is controlled tightly by the French government-owned Cogema and two other foreign firms. They and the Nigerien government own the two ventures that run the mines: Somair and a sister firm, Cominak.

Neither Somair nor Cominak has reported a threat or security incident involving a uranium shipment, but their officials acknowledge there is room for improvement.

"If some terrorist group wants to get a drum, they're going to get it. There's no way you can defend against it," the senior Somair manager said. Still, with each loaded drum weighing about half a ton, "it's nothing you can just take away under your coat."

The Nigerien government refused to let an AP reporter travel to uranium mines near the desert towns of Arlit and Akokan, 530 miles northeast of the capital, Niamey. However, officials at Somair and Cominak in Niamey insist security of their mines and uranium shipments is a high priority.

Nigerien soldiers and private guards protect the mining compounds, and the surrounding desert is so flat that intruders would be visible for several miles, the officials said.

The trucks and drums are painted with identification numbers and have labels identifying their contents as radioactive.

Mr. Hamadou, the secretary-general of Niger's Ministry of Mines and Energy, said the companies and government are taking adequate precautions. "I don't know of any weaknesses," he said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20031001-101113-2642r.htm>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Search in Iraq Finds No Banned Weapons

Tenet Assails Panel Leaders' Criticism of Prewar Data

By Dana Priest and Walter Pincus, Washington Post Staff Writers

After searching for nearly six months, U.S. forces and CIA experts have found no chemical or biological weapons in Iraq and have determined that Iraq's nuclear program was in only "the very most rudimentary" state, the Bush administration's chief investigator formally told Congress yesterday.

Before the war, the administration said Iraq had a well-developed nuclear program that presented a threat to the United States.

Now, "It clearly does not look like a massive, resurgent program, based on what we discovered," former U.N. weapons inspector David Kay, who heads the government's search, said yesterday after briefing House and Senate intelligence committees in a closed session on his interim report. He said he will need six to nine months to conclude his work, and congressional sources said the administration is requesting an additional \$600 million toward the effort to find weapons of mass destruction.

Kay, who heads the CIA's 1,400-person Iraq Survey Group, said the team had "discovered dozens of WMD-related program activities and significant amounts of equipment" that Iraq had hidden. He said he believes "there was an intent . . . to continue production at some point in time." Among the evidence unearthed was a network of laboratories and safe houses, a laboratory complex hidden in a prison and evidence of a program for ballistic and land-attack missiles with ranges prohibited by the United Nations.

After Kay's briefing, Republican and Democratic senators criticized the intelligence community for misreading the facts on the ground, and some said they believed the administration had misled the public about the threat Iraq posed.

"I'm not pleased by what I heard today," said Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, who has been supportive of the administration and the CIA. Roberts said he believes some of the raw intelligence did not support the administration's prewar statements about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and called some of the claims "sloppy."

"There's enough . . . to make me believe our intelligence was badly flawed," Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said as she exited the three-hour meeting.

In a separate but related matter, CIA Director George J. Tenet this week sent an angry letter to the two top House intelligence committee members to dispute as misguided and ill-informed their criticism of the raw intelligence used to assess the threat from Iraq.

"The suggestion by the committee that we did not challenge long-standing judgments and assessments is simply wrong," Tenet, a former Capitol Hill intelligence panel aide known for his smooth dealings with members of Congress, said in a letter to chairman Porter J. Goss (R-Fla.), of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and ranking member Jane Harman (D-Calif.).

Tenet was responding to a letter the two had sent him last week, after their panel examined 19 volumes of data underlying the assessment that Iraq posed a threat to the United States. The letter called the information outdated, circumstantial and fragmentary, and it criticized the CIA for not adequately vetting information or challenging some of its long-held assumptions.

Tenet's letter, obtained by The Washington Post, said the committee had not interviewed enough people to legitimately make its claims and that the communication raised serious claims "in ways that makes more difficult a reasoned and serious dialogue."

"In our view, the committee is not yet in a position to evaluate fully the [intelligence] community's work," the letter states. He also disputed the notion that the CIA did not develop enough human informants in Iraq that could provide fresh, credible information about Iraq since 1998, when U.N. inspectors left the country.

The agency, he said, "directed a sustained and intense collection effort to enable us to continue to make the best possible assessments" of Iraq's secretive weapons programs. "To my knowledge, the committee has never sought to understand the results of these collection initiatives before providing us your letter."

Kay's interim report and the exchange between Tenet and the House committee come at a time of heightened tension between the intelligence community, the White House and Congress over the building of the case for invading Iraq and the mounting costs of a violent, open-ended nation-building effort there.

"Did we misread it?" John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), the ranking Senate intelligence committee member, asked after meeting with Kay. "Or did they [the administration] mislead us, or did they simply get it wrong?"

Whatever the answer, it's not a good answer."

Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) said of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, "Maybe he was just playing an old card game bluff."

The administration is asking Congress to approve \$600 million to fund the weapons team's further investigation, double the amount the team has been allocated. While the program is classified, Kay suggested that one of the team's objectives will be to inspect and explode 600,000 tons of ordnance yet to be tested for chemical or biological warheads. The funding request, first reported by the New York Times, also came under attack by some senators. "At some point, we have to ask ourselves whether there's something better to spend our money on," Richard J. Durbin (D-Ill.) said.

Kay said his search was hindered by what appeared to be the destruction and looting of laboratories and archival records areas, including the destruction of selective computer hard drives as late as May. Inspectors found "small piles of ash where individual documents or binders of documents were intentionally destroyed," he said.

The team, Kay said, found evidence of new research on biological weapons agents, one biological organism concealed in a scientist's home that could be used to produce biological weapons, and labs with the capability to "surge the production of [biological] agents" quickly.

Kay described the two mobile labs discovered after the war ended in northern Iraq -- which President Bush once said confirmed that Hussein possessed programs for weapons of mass destruction -- as not being "ideally suited" for that use. "We have not yet been able to corroborate the existence of a mobile BW [biological weapons] production effort," the report states.

The survey has begun looking at equipment that could be used to resume chemical production, Kay said. He also indicated that there were leads on other purchases and attempted purchases of chemical agents. He said many scientists said, "Iraq did not have a large, ongoing, centrally controlled [chemical] weapons program after 1991." That finding conflicts with a finding in the intelligence community's October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that it was active.

Kay said Hussein wanted to obtain nuclear weapons, according to interviews with Iraqi scientists and government officials, but "to date we have not uncovered evidence that Iraq undertook significant post-1998 steps to actually build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material."

On Oct. 7, 2002, Bush said that "the evidence indicates that Iraq is reconstituting its nuclear weapons program. . . . Facing clear evidence of peril, we cannot wait for the final proof, the smoking gun that could come in the form of a mushroom cloud."

After the briefing, some lawmakers were optimistic that the military-CIA search would prove the administration's case against Hussein.

Goss, who co-authored the letter to Tenet last week, said of Kay's interim report: "I think the news is extremely good." He said that "no one was misled by the intelligence community." Goss said he believed the community had included the proper caveats in the October 2002 estimate but that "they were working with not quite enough intelligence."

He said his views were meant to be constructive, and that "instead of picking at Dr. Kay, we ought to congratulate him."

Researcher Margaret Smith contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A35638-2003Oct2.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Washington Post

October 3, 2003

Pg. 1

N. Korea Claims Nuclear Advance

Statements Suggest Bombs Being Made

By Anthony Faiola, Washington post Foreign Service

TOKYO, Oct. 2 -- North Korea declared today that it had finished reprocessing spent fuel rods into plutonium and now possesses "nuclear deterrence," suggesting it is making atomic bombs.

The claims surfaced in two public announcements. The Foreign Ministry, in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, asserted that North Korea "has successfully finished the reprocessing of some 8,000 spent fuel rods." Citing a "hostile policy" toward the North by the United States, the statement suggested North Korea had begun building nuclear weapons, saying it had "made a switchover in the use of plutonium churned out by reprocessing spent fuel rods in the direction [of] increasing its nuclear deterrent force."

At the same time, North Korea's vice foreign minister, Choe Su Hon, told reporters at its mission to the United Nations that his government is now "in possession of nuclear deterrence and we're continuing to strengthen that deterrence," according to China's official New China News Agency.

Choe said North Korea had "no intention of transferring any means of that nuclear deterrence to other countries." Although the statements appeared to fall short of an official declaration as a nuclear power, they represented a new challenge to attempts to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through intensive diplomatic talks. If true, the reprocessing claim -- made privately by the North Koreans to Bush administration officials in July -- would mean the North has enough enriched plutonium to build as many as four or five nuclear weapons. The CIA contends North Korea already possesses one or two bombs.

Though divisions exist among intelligence officials regarding the North's capabilities to operate a bomb assembly line, experts fear that any additional devices would give North Korea more room to conduct a test and officially declare itself the world's newest nuclear power.

"This latest North Korean statement could hurt efforts to resolve the nuclear problem peacefully and damage the atmosphere of dialogue," South Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Shin Bong Kil, said in the statement.

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell played down the North Korean statement. "First of all, I would say that this is the third time they have told us they just finished reprocessing the rods. We have no evidence to confirm that," he told reporters in Washington. "And so they say, once again, they've reprocessed the rods, and they say, once again, that they are going to go forward with their program.

"I believe that this is a matter of serious concern for the international community, and I think North Korea's neighbors should also be delivering a message to [North Korean leader] Kim Jong Il that the solution to the problem is for them to stop moving in this direction, continue to participate in the diplomacy that is underway," Powell said. The North Korean statement raised the stakes in a showdown that began late last year, when the isolated government of North Korea abandoned a 1994 agreement struck with the Clinton administration to keep its fuel rods locked up. It kicked out U.N. weapons inspectors, pulled out of a global non-proliferation treaty and announced that it had begun the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel into fissile material usable in bombs at the small reactor inside its main nuclear complex in Yongbyon, 55 miles north of the capital, Pyongyang. The reactor is believed by experts to have the capacity to produce one or two nuclear bombs a year.

Analysts and diplomats have insisted for months that it is extremely difficult to verify North Korea's nuclear assertions. The country has a history of increasing tensions ahead of tough diplomatic confrontations, usually through bluffing and brinkmanship.

The last round of talks in Beijing broke up in August with little progress having been made. In the weeks since, the parties involved -- the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea -- have struggled to win a commitment from the North to honor a pledge made in Beijing to return for more serious negotiations, which have tentatively been slated for late November.

But the North's statements today, analysts say, may be aimed at capitalizing on divisions between the United States and the other parties in the talks on how to best to handle North Korea. China, Russia and South Korea have pressed the Bush administration to soften its hard-line position on the North. North Korea is seeking international security guarantees, including a non-aggression pledge from the United States, before it agrees to dismantle its nuclear program. The Bush administration has said the North should agree to disarm before any security guarantees are offered.

"The United States is reviewing the results of the six-party meeting that we held in Beijing not too long ago, and we are examining ways, in cooperation with our colleagues in the area, to provide the kinds of security assurances that might help to move the process further along, Powell said today. "But the North Koreans go out of their way to make these statements from time to time, and we will continue to pursue diplomacy and not react to each and every one of their statements which seems to be a repeat of the previous statement."

"This could very likely be another attempt by North Korea aimed at division. They have a history of this, especially before talks are scheduled to resume," said Hyun In Taek, a leading North Korea analyst at Seoul's Korea University. "But it is still a serious threat. It is important to note that these claims cannot be easily verified, but if this turns out to be true, this is a major step backward that will have to be dealt with."

Staff writer Glenn Kessler in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A37091-2003Oct2.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

New York Times
October 3, 2003

Pakistan Test Fires Nuclear-Capable Missile

By Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Friday, Oct. 3 — Pakistan successfully test fired a medium-range, nuclear-capable missile early Friday, an army spokesman announced.

The Hatf-III reportedly has a range of 180 miles and can carry conventional and nonconventional weapons. Its range means it can hit many important targets inside India, Pakistan's longtime rival.

"We have successfully test-fired the Hatf-III," the spokesman, Gen. Shaukat Sultan, said. It was not immediately clear whether India was informed of the plans before the test.

General Sultan would not say where the test was conducted.

The missile test came as Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali was visiting the United States, and days after he met with President Bush.

India and Pakistan have frequently used missile tests as a form of diplomatic muscle-flexing.

Pakistan's last missile test came on March 26, when it fired off a short-range missile shortly after India announced a similar test.

In 1998, the two countries conducted tit-for-tat nuclear weapons tests, shocking the world and earning years of sanctions.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/03/international/asia/05MISS.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

Los Angeles Times

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News Analysis

Nuclear Waiting Game Called Risky

North Korea may be working in secret as the U.S. holds out for diplomacy, critics warn.

By Sonni Efron, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — When North Korea announced Thursday that it had finished reprocessing its 8,000 spent plutonium fuel rods — enough to make about six atomic bombs — official Washington all but yawned.

"This is the third time they have told us they have just finished reprocessing the rods," Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said dryly. "We have no evidence to confirm that."

A North Korean official's statement Wednesday that his government would not attend a second round of talks with five nations trying to persuade it to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs was likewise dismissed by a senior State Department official as no more credible than any of Pyongyang's claims.

The reaction highlighted the strategy the Bush administration has adopted toward North Korea, one of patience and unflappability shaped partly by design and partly by necessity.

In private, administration sources do not dispute that President Bush — facing a tough reelection campaign and a military stretched paper-thin by deployments in Iraq and elsewhere — can't afford another war this term. Unless North Korea matches its incendiary rhetoric with heinous deeds, analysts say, the president is unlikely to abandon his stated goal of achieving a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

The other nations involved in the talks — China, Russia, South Korea and Japan — are even more eager to avoid a showdown that could trigger hostilities, floods of North Korean refugees, or even a decision by Japan or South Korea to get their own nuclear arms.

Thus all five nations have an interest in making sure the negotiations do not collapse. A senior administration official said that Washington was willing to continue as long as negotiations were constructive but that it wouldn't wait indefinitely.

Conservative critics say that what the administration calls patience amounts to stalling, and carries great risk.

North Korea knows that the U.S. is fully occupied in Iraq, and while the communist nation considers whether to attend talks, it may be expanding and improving its nuclear arsenal and delivery systems, they warn.

"The most popular diplomatic plan still seems to be to kick the can down the road," complained hawkish nonproliferation expert Henry Sokolski in an article in this week's Weekly Standard, a politically conservative journal. Sokolski argues that the administration should work to have North Korea's breach and Iran's alleged breach of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty taken up by the U.N. Security Council as soon as possible, which could result in sanctions.

"Pushing these steps is sure to upset the diplomatic set, who have done their best to avoid such unpleasantness," Sokolski said. He added, however, that nonproliferation rules are meaningless unless they are enforced.

The danger, Sokolski and dovish arms control advocates agree, is that the message from Iraq and North Korea to other countries, including Iran, is that the way to escape Saddam Hussein's fate is to get a nuclear bomb quickly, before the United States finds out about it.

The administration's approach is based on the premise that time is on the American side. U.S. officials argue that the more North Korea advertises its nuclear capability, the more it isolates itself and alienates its last remaining sympathizers.

"The pro-engagement camp is not sure whether North Korea will change course but is prepared to spend years, if necessary, trying," said a Senate source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "This administration believes that to move quickly is essentially to fall into a North Korean trap and to pay a high [diplomatic] price for something we could essentially negotiate away for a lower price."

China has told the United States it would oppose bringing the North Korean issue to the Security Council, and China is central to the U.S. strategy of pressuring North Korea to disarm. The Chinese foreign minister, on a visit to Washington last week, reiterated Beijing's opposition to economic sanctions.

But Sokolski argues that the U.S. should enforce the international nuclear protocol, even if it means risking a Chinese veto.

"We should agree that the rules do matter, and we shouldn't be afraid to enforce them," he said in an interview.

"Sometimes you have to lose before you can win."

Others argue that taking North Korea to the U.N. — which Pyongyang has said it would consider an act of war — "puts us that much closer to a crisis, and the Bush administration is doing everything possible to avert a crisis," said L. Gordon Flake, executive director of the Washington-based Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs. He worries that the isolated and brash Kim Jong Il, North Korea's leader, could easily blunder into a war.

"We're just not ready for a war right now," Flake said. "We can't afford to be precipitous. Yes, there is just cause to go ahead and call North Korea's bluff on this, but to do so would be to go it alone.

"The further we go down this road, the more likely we are to have allies when North Korea does miscalculate and crosses the line," Flake said.

In a reversal of previous statements, North Korea's vice foreign minister said his country would not export its nuclear capacity to others. A senior State Department official brushed off that promise.

"They also said they weren't going to reprocess," he said.

Other diplomats and intelligence officials dismissed North Korea's claim that it had finished reprocessing the rods as "rhetoric" and "posturing."

However, the difficulty in obtaining conclusive intelligence about North Korea's nuclear activities has rattled Washington.

U.S. officials have long estimated that if the North Koreans were to run their large-scale plutonium-reprocessing facility at Yongbyon, they could produce enough plutonium for six bombs within 12 to 18 months. But intelligence officials have said they believe the facility, where activity was seen over the winter, is not operating now, whether because of technical problems or political considerations.

However, North Korea could be reprocessing plutonium or enriching uranium in secret facilities with centrifuges it is believed to have obtained from Pakistan. Underground uranium enrichment is slower, but detecting it is difficult because the "sniffer" technology that picks up the telltale gas emitted from plutonium reprocessing cannot detect uranium enrichment, experts say.

U.S. officials said they do have ways of uncovering uranium enrichment, but they declined to be specific.

"The bottom line is, we can't be confident on [detecting] anything," said Michael Levi, a nuclear physicist at the Washington-based Brookings Institution who tracks North Korea.

Of North Korea's claim that it has completed reprocessing all 8,000 rods without the CIA knowing, Flake said, "Either it's a typical North Korean bluff, or it's the most massive intelligence failure we've ever seen."

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[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)

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Pg. 1

Putin Beefs Up ICBM Capacity

By Simon Saradzhyan, Staff Writer

President Vladimir Putin told top military commanders Thursday that Russia will put dozens of multi-warhead SS-19 intercontinental ballistic missiles on combat duty.

In a separate development, a Defense Ministry paper released ahead of Putin's comments warned that Russia might have to revise its plans for military reform and nuclear defense strategy if NATO did not drop what it termed its "anti-Russian orientation."

Putin explained the move was to prevent further aging of the country's land-based strategic nuclear arsenal, and maintain its capacity to overcome any missile defense system.

"I am speaking here about the most menacing missiles, of which we have dozens, with hundreds of warheads," Putin told a gathering of top commanders and Kremlin officials at Defense Ministry headquarters. "Their capability to overcome any anti-missile defense is unrivaled."

Putin said the SS-19s would be put on duty to phase out hundreds of Soviet-era ICBMs that have aged beyond repeatedly extended service lives. Such replacements would give the defense industry a breathing space to develop new systems, he said.

Putin and U.S. President George W. Bush signed the so-called Moscow Treaty last May that requires the two countries to cut the number of warheads on combat duty to between 1,700 and 2,200 a side. It allows both countries to store, rather than dismantle the warheads. It is the scrapping of the START-II strategic arms reduction treaty, however, that has allowed Russia to keep SS-19s on combat duty.

Russia acquired and stored an unspecified number of Soviet-era SS-19s from Ukraine in the 1990s, according to Alexander Pikayev, a security analyst with the Carnegie Moscow Center. These stored missiles can remain in service until the 2030s, deputy chief of the General Staff Yury Baluyevsky told the meeting.

In addition to the pending introduction of the modernized SS-19s, the military may also revise its own nuclear doctrine if NATO does not amend its "offensive" doctrine, according to an undated draft Defense Ministry document on the modernization of the armed forces released to the press ahead of the meeting.

The document calls for a "change of Russian nuclear strategy" and "thorough reformation of the principles of military planning," if NATO's doctrine remains offensive.

While containing warnings to NATO, the 73-page document also praises the cooperation between Russia and the Western alliance.

It is the "new level of relations" with the West, including the United States, that allows Russia to "radically cut" its nuclear forces, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said.

He added that Russia should be ready to carry out pre-emptive strikes anywhere in the world. According to the Defense Ministry, the military should be prepared to fight two "conflicts of any type" simultaneously as well as carry out peacekeeping operations.

Ivan Safranchuk, the Moscow representative of the Washington-based Center for Defense Information, said Thursday that the armed forces would hardly be able to fight two regional conflicts simultaneously, let alone two "conflicts of any type."

But Pikayev said that some of the speeches, including warnings to NATO, could have been aimed at pleasing patriotic voters ahead of the State Duma elections.

<http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/10/03/001.html>

[\(Return to Articles and Documents List\)](#)