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Los Angeles Times

October 17, 2003

Pg. 1

Experts Downplay Bioagent

The vial of bacteria found in Iraq probably was bought legally and its type has never been turned into a weapon, scientists say.

By Bob Drogin, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON — A suspicious sample of biological material recently found by U.S. weapons hunters in Iraq probably was purchased legally from a U.S. organization in the 1980s and is a substance that has never been successfully used to produce a weapon, experts said.

The discovery of the hidden vial of *C. botulinum* Okra B, which was revealed in an Oct. 2 interim report by chief U.S. weapons hunter David Kay, was highlighted in speeches by President Bush, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and other senior administration officials as proof that President Saddam Hussein's government maintained an illicit bio-weapons program before the war.

The significance of the vial is one of several elements of Kay's report that are being called into question by U.S. biowarfare experts and former United Nations weapons inspectors. Although most praised Kay for uncovering numerous cases in which Iraq hid suspicious equipment and activities from U.N. inspectors, they said the report appeared misleading in several areas.

Overall, Kay, who returned to Iraq last week, reported that he had found no evidence so far to indicate that Hussein's regime had reconstituted its chemical weapons program, or had taken significant steps to build nuclear weapons or produce fissile material, after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

He found considerable evidence, however, that Hussein secretly had begun an extensive effort after 1998 to design missiles that violated U.N. rules; had launched numerous schemes to procure missile technology and other prohibited equipment from foreign suppliers, including North Korea; and had maintained a clandestine network of about two dozen small laboratories, run by Iraq's intelligence services, which Kay said contained equipment "suitable" for chemical or biological research.

The single vial of botulinum B had been stored in an Iraqi scientist's kitchen refrigerator since 1993. It appears to have been produced by a nonprofit Virginia biological resource center, the American Type Culture Collection, which legally exported botulinum and other biological material to Iraq under a Commerce Department license in the late 1980s.

The vial of botulinum B — about 2 inches high and half an inch wide — was the only suspicious biological material Kay reported finding. It was sealed and stored in the scientist's home with 96 other apparently benign vials of single-cell proteins and biopesticides.

In his 13-page declassified report, Kay said "a biological agent" could be produced from the botulinum sample. Speaking to reporters at the White House the next day, Oct. 3, Bush said the war in Iraq was justified and cited Kay's discovery of the advanced missile programs, clandestine labs and what he called "a live strain of deadly agent botulinum" as proof that Hussein was "a danger to the world."

But Dr. David Franz, a former chief U.N. biological weapons inspector who is considered among America's foremost experts on biowarfare agents, said there was no evidence that Iraq or anyone else has ever succeeded in using botulinum B for biowarfare.

"The Soviets dropped it [as a goal] and so did we, because we couldn't get it working as a weapon," said Franz, who is the former commander of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases at Ft. Detrick, Md., the Pentagon's lead laboratory for bioweapons defense research.

"From the weapons side, it's not something to be concerned about," agreed Dr. Raymond Zilinskas, another former U.N. inspector who is now director of the chemical and biological weapons nonproliferation program at the Monterey Institute in California.

Botulinum B is a source of botulism, a common form of deadly food poisoning that usually results from improper canning. It disperses quickly in the air, however, and thus is not effective as an airborne agent for weapons, Zilinskas said.

Asked for comment, a U.S. official who consulted with government experts said Kay "didn't oversell this."

"He stated a simple fact. What Dr. Kay said was botulinum B can be used to produce a biological agent," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "Can that agent be used to produce a biological weapon? You bet."

During the 1980s, Iraq produced botulinum A, a highly lethal neurotoxin that causes respiratory failure and can lead to death in 24 hours. According to U.N. reports, Iraqi scientists produced more than 19,000 liters of botulinum A and poured about 10,000 liters of the toxin into missile warheads and 400-pound bombs.

But U.N. inspectors found no evidence that Iraq ever produced botulinum B in its laboratories. A CIA spokesman said Kay has not yet traced the origin of the vial he obtained. But Zilinskas said the sample almost certainly came from American Type Culture Collection. "We know they bought their botulinum strains from the United States, including B," he said.

In 1994, an investigation by the House Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee determined that American Type Culture Collection had been a primary supplier of botulinum, anthrax and other pathogens to Iraq. The organization, based in Manassas, Va., shipped at least seven batches of botulinum strains to Baghdad in May 1986 and September 1988, according to records released by the committee.

Nancy Wysocki, a spokeswoman for the bioresource center, said there was no way for her to know if her organization had exported the vial of botulinum B found in Iraq. But she said all botulinum and other exports to Iraq at the time had been approved by the Commerce Department. "Iraq was not an embargoed country in the 1980s," she said.

The circumstances of the botulinum B find were one reason for Kay's concern. Some of the other vials found in the scientist's refrigerator had labels indicating they came from Al Hakam, which was one of Iraq's chief bioweapons production labs before 1991. In addition, Kay said the scientist also was asked by the government to store other

biological material, including a virulent strain of anthrax. He briefly did, but then returned the material. The scientist has passed a polygraph test, Kay said.

Terence Taylor, another former U.N. bio warfare inspector who now heads the Washington office of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a nonpartisan think tank, said it is too early to dismiss the discovery of the vial.

"Just because botulinum B has not been used in a weapons program elsewhere, and we never found evidence of it in the 1990s, that does not necessarily rule out" transforming it into a weapon, Taylor said. "There's not enough detail in Kay's [unclassified] statement. And there's a lot we still don't know about their weapons programs."

In addition to the doubts about the botulinum B, several outside experts are also questioning the significance of Kay's claim that he uncovered covert "new research" in Iraq on such potential bio warfare agents as Brucella and Congo Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever as well as "continuing work" on ricin and aflatoxin that were not declared to U.N. inspectors.

CCHF, as the hemorrhagic fever virus is known, is common in Iraq. The World Health Organization reports that the disease, which can cause intense bleeding and death, is "endemic in many countries in Africa, Europe and Asia." There is no evidence that Iraq or anyone else has weaponized it.

"There are public health reasons to work with it in that part of the world," said Franz, the former bio weapons lab chief. "I wouldn't find it alarming that they're working on that."

Brucella, which chiefly affects livestock, is also endemic to Iraq. U.S. military scientists weaponized the bacterium during the Cold War but did not consider it effective because it is slow acting and can be treated with antibiotics. U.N. inspectors have not found evidence that Iraq worked on Brucella as a weapon.

Aflatoxin causes vomiting and other incapacitating symptoms but is rarely lethal in humans. The fungal toxin is chiefly known for causing liver cancer. Iraq produced aflatoxin as a weapon in the 1980s, but nonproliferation program director Zilinskas said it has never been clear why.

"It's not particularly toxic, and its primary effects are long term," he said. "My feeling to this day is that it was a scam that the scientists put over on the decision-makers because it's easy to produce and the decision-makers wouldn't know it is useless as a biological weapon."

Hussein's regime also had sought to weaponize ricin, which can be highly lethal if inhaled, but ended the program in 1990 after field tests failed to kill animals, according to U.N. reports.

"They gave up using ricin as a weapon," Franz said. "That was the right decision, in my opinion." Because it is so difficult to produce the proper powdered form for aerosol distribution, he added, "you almost need to be hit by a brick of it to kill you."

Former U.N. inspectors also questioned Kay's plan to search Iraq's 130 known ammunition storage sites for further evidence of chemical weapons; he has scoured 10 so far. Kay reported: "As Iraqi practice was not to mark much of their chemical ordnance and [was] to store it at the same [sites] that held conventional rounds, the size of the required search is enormous."

U.N. inspectors found, however, that virtually all of Iraq's "special munitions," as chemical and biological weapons were known, carried distinctive, if inconsistent, markings. They included numbers, a black stripe, a white circle or a painted letter.

"Kay's comment gives the impression [that chemical weapons] were kept with conventional munitions and he'll have to check every shell," said another former U.N. inspector, who asked not to be identified. "That's baloney. They kept them separated from regular munitions, they had separate security, and they had a separate chain of command. They were never co-located with conventional munitions."

<http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/la-fg-wmd17oct17001431,1,581790.story>

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Denver Post
October 17, 2003

Missile Defense Soldiers Deploy

System command settles at Peterson

By Erin Emery, Denver Post Southern Colorado Bureau

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE - The nation on Thursday began putting soldiers in place to command and control a ground-based missile defense system designed to protect the United States from a ballistic missile attack.

The Army activated the 90-soldier Ground-based Midcourse Defense Brigade, which includes National Guard and active-duty soldiers. The full-time soldiers will serve as command and control for the \$22 billion system.

The missiles that make up the defense system fire "kill vehicles" that collide with enemy missiles at altitudes of 100 miles to 250 miles above the Earth. Early-warning and long-range radar from the Air Force and Navy will help with

detection. The nation plans by next fall to have up to 10 defense missiles on alert: six at Fort Greeley, Alaska, and four at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

"What happens in Colorado, this is the command and control hub, working with Northern Command and Strategic Command in Omaha. This is the central nerve center for the midcourse defense system," said Lt. Gen. Joseph Cosumano Jr., commander of the Army Space & Missile Defense Command.

If an enemy launched a missile, NORAD - North American Aerospace Defense Command - would notify the brigade soldiers, who will work at computer terminals inside Cheyenne Mountain, at Northern Command at Peterson, and in other buildings in Colorado Springs. Those soldiers, in turn, would notify operators in Alaska and California.

"It's almost the same kind of system now that we have with our offensive missiles that carry nuclear weapons," said Rick Lehner, spokesman for the Missile Defense Agency.

NORAD sends "the orders to the people who man the offensive missiles, based upon the president's direction, to retaliate. It's the same principle, but (the brigade must) provide the information to the interceptors in the field as to where the incoming missiles are."

A 40-page General Accounting Office report released last month warns that only two of 10 technologies in the defense system are ready. The GAO says the government will have to spend a lot more money if the system is going to be operational by this time next year.

The United States has been working to develop missile defense since the early 1980s and a ground-based system since the mid-1990s.

Five of eight tests of the new system were successful between October 1999 and December 2002. The last test failed because the "kill vehicle" and its booster rocket didn't separate. Engineers believe they have corrected the problem, Lehner said.

"It will work," Lehner said. "There's no doubt about that, it will work. We know from the successful intercepts we have that it can be done. It's more a matter of engineering now than it is of science. It's a matter of refining everything and making it work together. ..."

Col. Gary Baumann, commander of the brigade, said the number of countries with ballistic missiles has increased threefold from the nine that possessed them in 1972.

Bill Sulzman, a Colorado Springs peace activist who opposes the military in space, said a number of scientific critiques say the system doesn't work, yet the money keeps coming.

"They are able, as with any military appropriation, to finally get their money in Washington even though questions are raised. No one is standing up and saying: 'Shut off the faucet.'"

<http://www.denverpost.com/Stories/0,1413,36%257E53%257E1704020,00.html>

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Philadelphia Inquirer

October 17, 2003

N. Korea: May Test Nuclear Weapon

By Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korea hinted yesterday that it might test a nuclear weapon in what would be a major escalation in the yearlong standoff with the United States and its allies over the North's atomic ambitions.

In comments attributed to a spokesman for its Foreign Ministry, North Korea said it would "open its nuclear deterrent to the public as a physical force."

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell reacted cautiously. "They have said things like this before," he said in Washington. "I just don't know if they mean it."

Nevertheless, North Korea's remarks were the strongest indication yet that the communist country, already suspected of adding to its estimated arsenal of one or two nuclear bombs, would conduct a test to prove itself an atomic power.

"Recently some people of the international community argued whether the DPRK possesses a nuclear deterrent force or not in an attempt to sound out its inmost thought," the spokesman said. "When an appropriate time comes, the DPRK will take a measure to open its nuclear deterrent to the public as a physical force, and then there will be no need to have any more argument."

DPRK stands for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/7032619.htm>

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New York Times
October 17, 2003

Iran: Nuclear Talks

Mohamed ElBaradei, chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said in a brief visit that he had received assurances of Iran's readiness to sign a protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that would allow tougher inspections of its nuclear sites. Dr. ElBaradei said the assurance was given after a meeting with Hassan Rowhani, the secretary of the high national security council.

--Nazila Fathi (NYT)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/17/international/middleeast/17BRIE3.html>

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Washington Times
October 17, 2003
Pg. 1

Al Qaeda Pursued A 'Dirty Bomb'

Suspect sought nuke material

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

A key al Qaeda terrorism suspect was in Canada looking for nuclear material for a "dirty bomb," The Washington Times has learned.

Adnan El Shukrijumah is being sought by the FBI and CIA in connection with a plot to detonate a dirty bomb — a conventional explosive laced with radioactive material.

According to an FBI informant, El Shukrijumah was spotted last year in Hamilton, Ontario, posing as a student at McMaster University, which has a 5-megawatt research reactor. U.S. officials believe El Shukrijumah, whose photograph was posted on the FBI's Web site in March, was in Hamilton trying to obtain radioactive material. One U.S. official said El Shukrijumah is a key North American al Qaeda member who is useful to other Middle Eastern members of the terrorist group because of his knowledge of the United States and his ability to speak English.

El Shukrijumah was identified by the informant after his photograph was made public by the FBI in March. He is believed to be part of an al Qaeda cell in Canada and the United States that was planning a dirty-bomb attack. The status of the bomb plot is not known.

Spokesmen for the FBI, CIA, Canadian Security Intelligence Service and Royal Canadian Mounted Police declined to comment on El Shukrijumah's stay in Canada.

Jane Johnson, a spokeswoman for McMaster University, declined to comment on whether El Shukrijumah was ever a student at the school. She said such information is confidential.

A Homeland Security Department official said earlier this week that recent information indicates al Qaeda is continuing to plan attacks, including strikes within the United States.

"We have received a lot of good information from these detainees over the past several weeks and corroborated the fact there were active plans, ongoing, to conduct another attack in the United States," William H. Parrish, an intelligence official with the department, told the Associated Press.

"This attack, as they indicated, was probably going to be multiple attacks — simultaneous," he said.

Another U.S. official said al Qaeda could strike targets in several places, including the Persian Gulf, East Africa and Southeast Asia, as well as Europe and the United States.

In addition to El Shukrijumah, the informant said that at least three other al Qaeda terrorists were seen in Hamilton in 2002. They include Anas al-Liby, one of the FBI's most wanted terrorists, Jaber A. Elbaneh and Amer El-Maati. Al-Liby has been linked by U.S. authorities to the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

El Shukrijumah and El-Maati are being sought for questioning by the FBI in connection with terrorist threats against the United States, according to the bureau's counterterrorism Web site.

Elbaneh is wanted by the FBI as part of a federal criminal complaint made public in May on charges of providing support to al Qaeda as part of a terrorist cell near Buffalo, N.Y.

FBI officials have said El Shukrijumah lived in southern Florida and was identified by captured al Qaeda leader Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. He left the United States in May 2002 and is believed to be in the Middle East, one U.S. official said.

El Shukrijumah's connection to the dirty-bomb plot is based on his stay in southern Florida at the same time as another al Qaeda suspect, Jose Padilla.

Padilla is a Muslim convert who was arrested in May 2002 in Chicago after returning from Switzerland. He was detained as an enemy combatant and transferred to U.S. military custody.

Padilla has not talked to U.S. officials, but intelligence agencies believe he and El Shukrijumah were conspirators in the bomb plot.

U.S. intelligence officials said earlier this year that al Qaeda planned to detonate a dirty bomb inside the United States, a plot directed by Mohammed.

According to the officials, the al Qaeda members were sent to North America and assigned with making the bomb from materials acquired there, rather than trying to smuggle conventional explosives and radioactive material into the United States.

The terrorists were to buy or steal radioactive material with help from people who had access to research reactors or radioactive medical waste.

El Shukrijumah was also identified from documents obtained in connection with the 2002 arrest in Pakistan of Ramzi Binalshibh, a key planner of the September 11 attacks.

El Shukrijumah is believed to be a terrorist organizer similar to Mohamed Atta, the ringleader of the attacks that killed more than 3,000 people at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and in Shanksville, Pa.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20031016-110337-4698r.htm>

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Birmingham (AL) News

October 16, 2003

Report Urges Army To Rush Destruction Of Gelled Sarin

By Mary Orndorff, News Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON - The Army should speed up the destruction of M55 rockets filled with gelled sarin because it would be safer for the people of Anniston than storing them, according to a scientific report released Wednesday. The National Research Council, in a study sponsored by the Army, found that the chemical weapons incinerator in Alabama could safely destroy the tricky gel-filled rockets faster than did a similar facility in Utah.

"Because there is a small chance that stored sarin- and VX-filled rockets might self-ignite at any time and release toxic agents and metals, these rockets need to be destroyed as soon as possible," said James Mathis, a retired engineer from Exxon Corp. and chair of the committee that wrote the report.

The findings essentially support plans at the Anniston incinerator to process gelled rockets as fast as possible without violating the limits set by state regulators who monitor the incinerator's performance on safety and emissions.

About 20 percent of the outdated M55 rockets in Anniston's stockpile, or about 8,706 rockets, are believed to contain sarin nerve agent that is no longer in liquid form. The gelled substance is tougher to handle and takes longer to destroy. Trial burns with the gelled rockets are scheduled for early next year.

The National Research Council, a division of the National Academy of Sciences, suggests that the gelled rockets can be safely dealt with at a rate faster than the 1.6 per hour accomplished in Tooele, Utah. But the panel also cautioned against aspiring to run the rockets through at 34 an hour, fearing the speed could cause the temperature in the furnace to spike and some of the deadly agent to be released.

During trial burns of non-lethal agents, the Anniston incinerator was able to destroy 34 gelled rockets per hour, according to spokesman Mike Abrams. But that rate is not being considered for actual burns, he said.

When the time comes, the Anniston facility plans to run one gelled sarin rocket through at a time, which takes at least six minutes. The would put the total rate at nine or 10 per hour, Abrams said. The incinerator's state permit allows up to 14 gelled sarin rockets per hour.

"Considering the climate we're in, I would not foresee (the Alabama Department of Environmental Management) ever giving us the option of doing more than 14," Abrams said. "There are concerns and sensitivities and we are aware of those, and we believe the schedule we have can accommodate that."

Craig Williams, a critic of the incineration process, said the National Research Council report was a "mixed bag."

"We strongly disagree that the storage risk justifies pushing the envelope on operational safety concerns ... in such a populated area," said Williams, director of the Chemical Weapons Working Group in Kentucky.

But Williams did agree with the panel's other recommendation that state regulators conduct more frequent monitoring for other harmful emissions from the incinerator's stack.

Except for a round of testing during initial trial burns after the incinerator has ramped up to full operations, there will be no monitoring for PCBs, dioxins and heavy metals.

<http://www.al.com/news/birminghamnews/index.ssf?/base/news/1066295816268160.xml>

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Bioweapons Vets Urged To Share Secrets

Associated Press

October 16, 2003

FREDERICK, Md. - They are veterans of biological weapons research dating back to World War II and the Cold War. They have done their duty, and they have kept their secrets.

But that's a problem, says retired Army Gen. John S. Parker.

Parker is former commander of Fort Detrick, home of the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, where the military began conducting biological warfare research in 1943.

Parker and others hope to interview the old-timers to preserve their knowledge. "There is more to the story than has been written," Parker said at a Sept. 20 reunion of workers from the bioweapons program. "It's important to know what's been done and the thoughts behind it."

Parker would like to produce a public document to help guide the nation's response to the threat of biological weapons. It could broaden the foundation for biodefense research and reduce duplication of work done decades ago, Parker said.

For example, Parker said, despite the declassification in 1999 of documents describing experiments with simulated anthrax and other organisms, questions remain about the most effective ways of disseminating biological agents. Even anecdotal information could be useful, Parker said.

The Detrick researchers were barred from discussing their work publicly at the time, and many disagreed with President Nixon's 1969 ban on offensive biological weapons. The labs at Fort Detrick are now used to develop defenses to biological agents.

Public awareness of Fort Detrick and its history has increased since the still-unsolved anthrax mailings that killed five people and sickened 17 others in the fall of 2001.

On Oct. 5, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, R-Md., hosted a 60th anniversary event honoring the work done by Fort Detrick researchers and volunteers. Their research contributed to the development of vaccines for anthrax, botulism and several other diseases; the invention of equipment for studying airborne transmission of respiratory diseases; and the discovery of new techniques for sterilizing laboratories.

"They have made major contributions to defense, not just to defense against biological weapons, but major contributions to the medical area. There are vaccines that just would not have been developed without them," Bartlett said.

Some bioweapons researchers are eager to share their memories.

"I'm proud of what we did," said Joseph V. Jemski, a retired microbiologist who worked at Detrick from 1952 to 1983 and still lives in Frederick.

Under the offensive weapons program, Jemski exposed laboratory animals to aerosolized anthrax spores to study the death rates.

Some of those who worked at Fort Detrick contacted the FBI after the 2001 anthrax attacks, offering their insights. But others remain hesitant to come forward, still smarting from what they consider a distorted public perception of their work.

"I have never read in the open media any articles that really showed the good things that came out of biological warfare research," said Alan M. Miller, 75, also a retired microbiologist. "They used to use the term 'dirty warfare' in relation to biological warfare. Well, what's a clean war?"

Miller, of Frederick, refuses to disclose much about his work at Detrick. "I was involved in a project that was based on the principle that in order to keep a man in fighting stead, it took quite a few people behind him. If you could make a man sick, and keep him sick for one, two, three weeks, that would tie up quite a few other people."

Contributing to public concerns about the military research is the case involving Dr. Steven J. Hatfill, a former Detrick researcher whom the FBI labeled a "person of interest" in connection with the 2001 anthrax attacks. Hatfill sued the federal government, claiming a malicious campaign was launched against him - including 24-hour surveillance - because the FBI was unable to solve the case. Federal officials have said Hatfill is not a suspect and that they have no evidence directly linking him to the attacks.

But despite the sometimes negative press surrounding their work, reunion participants - whether they were scientists, engineers, building managers, or maintenance workers - invariably said they were proud to have worked on a Cold War program that their government said was needed, although the weapons were never used.

"To me, it was a duty," said Herbert Bloom, 85, of Frederick. "I realized that what we were doing was important."

But the opportunity to mine the memories of these aging veterans will not last forever. A reunion in 2001 attracted 290 participants; the reunion this year was down to just 230, including workers' spouses.

"The knowledge you hold, you hold it in a very select way. A lot of you are the only ones who know what you know," Parker told them. "We are making sure we can reach out to you, to know what you did, what you know, for the future defense of the United States."

http://www.military.com/NewsContent?file=FL_vets_101603

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Washington Post

October 20, 2003

Pg. 1

Bush Says Pact With N. Korea Possible

Security Guarantee Linked to Steps on Nuclear Programs

By Mike Allen and Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Foreign Service

BANGKOK, Oct. 19 -- President Bush said Sunday that he is willing to commit to a written guarantee not to attack North Korea in exchange for steps by the country toward abandoning its nuclear weapons programs.

Bush's aides said he wants to have a proposal ready for North Korea to consider by year's end, when administration officials hope to restart the six-nation nuclear talks with North Korea that began haltingly in August.

The new approach constitutes a change for a White House that had resisted offering security guarantees that North Korea might consider a concession. North Korea has openly pursued nuclear weapons despite agreeing to freeze its programs in 1994 in a deal with the Clinton administration. Some U.S. officials contend the country already possesses one or two nuclear weapons.

Bush ruled out the idea of a formal nonaggression treaty, which North Korea has insisted must be part of an agreement involving nuclear concessions. "We will not have a treaty," Bush said during a photo session with Thailand's prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. "That's off the table."

Bush said he would sign a security declaration if it were a joint agreement with the four other countries participating in the talks with North Korea -- China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. A senior administration official said Bush had ruled out a bilateral agreement on the principle that if North Korea violated a multiparty pact, "they would not only be dismissive of the United States, but they would also be dismissive of the other parties that participated in the assurance."

Although Bush aides said allies have encouraged the new approach, the immediate public reaction was restrained. Chinese President Hu Jintao, sitting next to Bush after they met Sunday, said simply that he would continue working to promote the six-party talks process "so as to strive for a peaceful resolution of this issue." Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Russian President Vladimir Putin made public statements that touched on the North Korean talks, but did not address Bush's plan. Putin said he expects "good, positive results" if the talks continue as they are now structured and take account of North Korea's concerns.

North Korean officials have sought security guarantees since Bush labeled the country part of an "axis of evil" that included Iran and the former government of Iraq. Bush on Sunday reiterated his determination to resolve the North Korean dispute peacefully, and drew a distinction between U.S. policy toward North Korea and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

North Korea's response to Bush's new plan is difficult to predict because it has long sought a formal treaty with the United States. The Clinton administration gave North Korea several written assurances about security, but a multinational guarantee is a new concept.

Bush discussed the possibility of a multilateral security agreement with Hu on the sidelines of an economic summit here in the capital of Thailand. Bush floated the idea with Koizumi on the way to Bangkok last week, and aides said he plans to take it up with South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun on Monday.

"We think there's an opportunity to move the process forward and we're going to discuss it with our partners," Bush said as he met reporters in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

Bush, reiterating a position he first took in February 2002, said he has "no intention of invading North Korea." He said he has made it plain North Korea "must get rid of her weapons program . . . in a verifiable way," and added that he is now considering ways to restate that "on paper, with our partners' consent."

While the administration in the past has said North Korea must verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear programs before the administration responds, on Sunday aides set no specific prerequisites and hinted at some type of interim agreement.

"We have to see progress before we can take steps," the senior official said. "We're not saying that everything has to be done before we will do anything. In fact, we're saying just the opposite."

The official suggested, however, that the administration would rely on "things that we can see happening on the ground, as opposed to just hollow assurances."

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said in interviews taped here that the possibilities include a simple pledge that none of the countries would invade North Korea. "We believe that there are models that can be looked at from the past that will allow us to find the kind of security agreement that would contain the assurances that North Korea should find satisfactory," Powell told CNN.

National security adviser Condoleezza Rice said on CBS's "Face the Nation" that North Korea "gains nothing from this nuclear weapons program."

"We will not be threatened by it or be made afraid as a result of this program," she said.

The administration began hinting at an openness to a security agreement on Oct. 10, when Powell told wire service reporters that his staff was examining a range of security agreements issued by nations since the turn of the century. He said the research was the result of the fact the North Koreans had "shifted their language" about nonaggression pacts.

Officials said that during a meeting at Camp David the weekend before Bush left for Asia, he formally decided to take the idea to the Chinese. The White House said Bush had a similar discussion with Russian President Putin at Camp David at the end of last month.

Administration officials suggested that they expect China, North Korea's neighbor, to take the lead in trying to convince Pyongyang that the guarantee would be an acceptable solution to the impasse. Officials said the idea had been gradually introduced to the Chinese, with more details provided today. "If they wash their hands of it, it's not going to work," the senior official said.

Powell has been engaged in a long struggle over North Korea with other members of the administration. Powell has pressed for a cycle of talks that would lead to an agreement, often over the objections of other members of Bush's inner circle. Opponents of talks agreed to the six-way formula only because they were convinced it would fail, according to administration sources.

Sunday's announcement was designed to encourage North Korea to return to the six-way nuclear talks, after the North Koreans had sent mixed signals about whether they should continue. It also was an effort to assure allies that the United States has ideas and is willing to engage in substantive negotiations. Many of the U.S. allies made it clear they were disappointed that the administration did not offer a more concrete proposal at the talks in August.

The senior official acknowledged that the Chinese, in particular, "have been pressing us" to come up with some form of security assurances. China has said it wants a second round of talks by the end of the year, and the White House supports that schedule.

The administration has ramped down its rhetoric on North Korea noticeably since Jan. 15, when Ari Fleischer, then the White House press secretary, said, "North Korea wants to take the world through its blackmail playbook, and we won't play."

Also Sunday, an administration official briefing reporters after the meeting with Hu said the administration has "initialed an agreement" with the Chinese to set up a joint group of experts "to see how China could move more rapidly towards a genuine floating exchange rate."

Bush has complained that China has cost jobs in the United States by keeping the value of its currency -- the yuan, or renminbi -- artificially low to give Chinese manufacturers an unfair trade advantage.

During the photo session with the Thai prime minister, Bush was asked what he thinks of a new tape of a voice purported to be Osama bin Laden, aired throughout the Arab world on Saturday. He expressed no skepticism that the voice was bin Laden's. "I think that the bin Laden tape should say to everybody: The war on terror goes on, that there's still a danger for free nations," he said. "And we've got to find them."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A50725-2003Oct19.html>

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USA Today
October 20, 2003

Iran Hints At Flexibility In Its Nuclear Stance

By Barbara Slavin, USA Today

Facing an Oct. 31 deadline to satisfy international inspectors that it is not preparing to build nuclear bombs, Iran hinted Sunday that it might give up its controversial uranium-enrichment program and invited the foreign ministers of Britain, France and Germany to Tehran to discuss a negotiated solution.

"We will do whatever is necessary to solve the problems, and in return, we're expecting our rights to be preserved, which is (the right) to have nuclear technology," Iranian President Mohammad Khatami told reporters in Tehran. Khatami was responding to questions about whether Iran would give up enriching uranium, as the United States, Britain, France and Germany have demanded. It was the first indication Iran might do so.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, has given Iran until the end of this month to answer a series of questions about a program experts say could enable the Islamic regime to build a bomb by 2005.

If Iran does not comply, the IAEA board could refer the matter to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions against Iran. But experts say there is also a serious potential for pre-emptive military action by the United States or by Israel, which regards Iran as its most potent adversary in the Middle East.

Stakes bigger than Iran

How the dispute is handled could determine whether the nuclear non-proliferation arrangement that has limited the spread of nuclear weapons for nearly four decades survives. At stake, too, is a chance to repair the troubled U.S.-European alliance and to improve U.S. relations with Iran. Iran has been at odds with the United States for more than 20 years, but its cooperation could be key to building a stable Iraq and ending the Arab-Israeli dispute.

"If we don't get Iran's nuclear business right, we can expect further disunity and acrimony within the Western alliance, further proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Middle East and the de facto end of the nuclear non-proliferation regime," says Geoffrey Kemp, a Middle East expert at the Nixon Center, a foreign policy think tank. Iran has been seeking nuclear technology since the time of the shah, the monarch who was overthrown in an Islamic revolution in 1979. Iranian officials adamantly insist that their program is meant only to generate electricity for a growing population, not to accumulate ingredients for weapons.

"We have a plan to produce 6,000 megawatts of electricity in the next 20 years," Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told reporters last month in New York, where he attended the U.N. General Assembly.

But a troubling series of recent discoveries by U.N. inspectors has cast doubt on Iran's claims that its program is only for peaceful purposes:

*Traces of highly enriched, weapons-grade uranium have been found at two sites in Iran, a purported watchmaking plant near Tehran and a uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz, south of the capital.

The Natanz plant's existence was kept secret until last year, when an Iranian opposition group revealed it. Iran also did not admit, until forced by opposition disclosures, to having a facility at Arak, near Natanz, to make heavy water. That substance allows the use of natural uranium ore in a reactor to produce plutonium, another ingredient for bombs.

Iran says the traces of highly enriched uranium came from imported centrifuge equipment that was contaminated before Iran purchased it. Iran has not identified the supplier of the equipment, but it is believed to have come from Pakistan.

*Iran failed to report, as required by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, that it imported nearly 2 million tons of uranium ore from China in 1991. It has also failed to account for what happened to it all.

*Iranians have tried to purchase items in Europe that have civilian uses but can also be used for nuclear weapons. Among them: a device that can break up kidney stones — or trigger nuclear explosions.

Missiles could carry nukes

Adding to the worries: Iran conducted a successful test in July of its Shahab-3 missile, which can carry a 2,200-pound payload more than 900 miles. That would put Israel well within range.

The "size of its payload suggests that the missile is intended to carry a nuclear warhead," David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, wrote in the latest issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*.

The IAEA "has found conclusively that Iran is pursuing a clandestine program to produce fissile material that could be used to build nuclear weapons," Secretary of State Colin Powell told an Arab-American forum in Detroit Sept. 29. "Through the IAEA, the international community has sent Iran a forceful message that this program must stop. It will not be tolerated."

Iran's bombmaking program is clearly far ahead of where Iraq's was before the U.S. invasion. And unlike with Iraq — where a number of U.S. allies questioned American claims that Saddam Hussein's regime possessed a weapons program that represented a real threat to the world — France, Germany and other Western nations also regard the Iranian program as extremely troubling.

In an interview last month, French President Jacques Chirac said that "if Iran doesn't agree to the IAEA demands, we fully agree with the Americans that the matter should go to the (U.N.) Security Council, which should take all the appropriate decisions."

This solid front is increasing pressure on the Iranians to answer the IAEA's questions before the deadline and, at the very least, sign an additional agreement with the IAEA that will permit intrusive inspections of suspect sites with almost no warning.

Britain, Germany and France have added the demand that Iran give up uranium enrichment, in return for guaranteed supplies of nuclear fuel and technology for civilian uses. An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Sunday that foreign ministers from the three countries had been invited to visit Tehran this week to discuss a solution.

A British Foreign Ministry official would not confirm that the visit would occur but told the Associated Press that London was working with Paris and Berlin to decide how to pressure Tehran to urgently "address the widespread international concerns over its nuclear program."

Some experts say Iran should not be allowed to have civilian nuclear power plants, such as one that has been under construction for more than a decade at the southern port of Bushehr.

Russia delays Bushehr project

Russia, which took over construction of the \$800 million Bushehr project after Germany pulled out, announced Oct. 13 that it would delay starting up the reactor until 2005. The Russians claimed the reasons were technical, not political. However, the announcement came shortly after President Bush hosted Russian leader Vladimir Putin at Camp David.

Russia has offered to provide fuel for the reactor and take back the used fuel rods. But some experts say Iran could suddenly withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and use the fuel for bombs.

"People do not understand how difficult it is to safeguard what the Iranians are doing," says Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, a think tank based in Washington. "At any given time, Iran can turn the reactor off and begin to make a bomb's worth a day."

Sunday's comments by Khatami suggesting new flexibility about the uranium enrichment program were not entirely unexpected.

U.S. officials have said they expect Iran to offer some concessions before Oct. 31 to try to drive a wedge between the United States and Europe.

"They will try and throw sand in our eyes and use a modest level of cooperation ... to conceal as much as they can, to delay, to fight for time, and to avoid having the issue referred to the Security Council," John Bolton, undersecretary of State for arms control and international security, said in London on Oct. 9.

<http://www.usatoday.com/usatoday/20031020/5602515s.htm>

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Defense Week Daily Update
October 17, 2003

Reliance On Foreign Firm Creates Risky Chemical-Suits Supply, GAO Says

By John M. Donnelly

WASHINGTON--The Defense Department relies on one foreign manufacturer for the special lining in the suits that protect U.S. soldiers from germs and gas--a risky supply line for one of the Pentagon's most important pieces of battlefield gear, officials told *Defense Week*.

The previously unpublicized dependence creates a potential vulnerability that has analysts at the General Accounting Office worried. The Defense Department acknowledges "some risk," but says it is taking steps to reduce it.

The disclosure comes as Congress is embroiled in a "Buy America" debate--whether to limit to U.S. companies the field of competitors for important military items. However, GAO's argument is not that foreigners should be excluded from competing to build components of the suits--but rather that critical military eggs should not be placed in one foreign basket.

At issue is the Joint Service Lightweight Integrated Suit Technology--the so-called JSLIST suit: the latest garment that shields soldiers from chemical, biological and other agents.

According to several U.S. government officials and documents, an American firm called Tex-Shield, Inc. licenses a single German company, Bluecher GmbH, to provide its Saratoga filter fabric for the suit's lining, which blocks dangerous substances from contacting a soldier's body. Bluecher, in turn, subcontracts a single Japanese firm called Kureha Chemical Industry Company Ltd. for unique carbon beads used in the filter fabric.

"We are dependent upon a German company that uses a proprietary Japanese carbon bead to produce the vital filter fabric for our JSLIST suits," said Ray Decker, one of the General Accounting Office's top experts on military protective gear, in an interview. "This foreign dependence does place us at some risk, even though these countries are our allies. The risk could be precipitated by a disruption in supply--whether caused by a political, economic or other event. There is no alternative supply of these critical components."

Reliance on one company of any nationality for such an important component is risky, because problems from the everyday to the improbable--from a factory fire to a terrorist attack--could imperil the supply. But turning to one foreign company raises additional potential risks. A political decision could bring supplies to a halt or force U.S. officials to pay in some other way for assured access to the suits.

The GAO has expressed its concern about the potential vulnerability in a classified report and, in far broader and briefer terms, in an unclassified one-page summary that was made public last month. The document gained some publicity--but not the specifics of U.S. reliance on foreign sources for its JSLIST shields.

"There is always some risk to the delivery of essential material by foreign suppliers," said a spokeswoman for the Army, the Defense Department's executive agent for joint chemical and biological defense.

But she said the service is taking steps to alleviate the problem. Starting this fiscal year, the Army plans to begin attempting to qualify alternative U.S. manufacturers of the lining and stockpiling the foreign liner components as a hedge against a disruption in supply.

The JSLIST suit, which repels dangerous agents, has replaced multiple, older suit models, including the Battle Dress Overgarment, or BDO, which used charcoal lining to absorb germs and gas in the suit before they got to the soldier. The JSLIST gear is the first to be worn jointly by all three services. It is more comfortable to wear and more capable than its predecessors.

From 1997 to 2001, the Defense Department bought about 2.1 million JSLIST suits for a total cost of \$473 million, according to the Army.

The suits are assembled by several National Industries for the Severely Handicapped Facilities.

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Washington Post

October 21, 2003

Pg. 1

Europeans Seek Arms Accord In Tehran

Iran Would Get Aid on Civilian Nuclear Program

By Glenn Frankel and Keith B. Richburg, Washington Post Foreign Service

TEHRAN, Oct. 21 (Tuesday) -- The foreign ministers of France, Germany and Britain flew to Iran on Monday, seeking a commitment from the Islamic state to suspend uranium enrichment and accept tough new inspections of its nuclear facilities. In return, Iran would get European help in developing a civilian nuclear energy program.

The ministers were to meet with President Mohammad Khatami later Tuesday to try to break an impasse over Iran's refusal to comply with similar demands from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Some European and Iranian officials were optimistic Tuesday that the ministers would reach a formal accord in Tehran, 10 days before an IAEA deadline to meet its demands or have the matter referred to the U.N. Security Council. "I don't know if it's 100 percent yet, but it should be finalized tomorrow, most probably, in the presence of the three ministers," said a European Union diplomat in Brussels who is close to the talks.

But other European diplomats stressed that no agreement had been struck and said Iran would be particularly reluctant to give up fuel enrichment. One characterized the meeting as a "fairly high-risk enterprise."

Tensions between Iran and the West have risen over suspicions that spending on large-scale nuclear facilities masks a weapons program. Last year, President Bush publicly labeled the country part of an "axis of evil" for trying to acquire weapons of mass destruction. The Iranian government denies it is developing nuclear weapons and says its programs are aimed at generating electrical power.

The European foreign ministers -- Dominique de Villepin of France, Joschka Fischer of Germany and Jack Straw of Britain -- plan to demand three things of Iran, all of them echoing conditions that the IAEA set down at a board meeting on Sept. 12, according to European officials: They want Iran to agree to fully disclose all information about its nuclear facilities, to accept a new and more stringent inspection system and to suspend its program to enrich and process nuclear fuel that experts fear could be used in weapons.

European officials said the Iranians appeared to agree to the first two conditions in recent meetings with the head of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, and senior European diplomats. But the third demand would be much harder for the Iranians to accept, they said. "Getting the Iranians to stop completely, after all they've invested, will be very difficult," said one Europe-based official familiar with the issue.

Ultimately, European officials said, they want Iran to agree to give up developing fissile material of any kind and to dismantle its nuclear fuel development program. In return, the Europeans would promise to sell Iran enough fuel to develop its civilian nuclear energy program, while ensuring that the fuel could not be used to develop weapons.

The three foreign ministers first floated this proposal in a joint letter to the Iranians in August, and their diplomats reiterated it last week in discussions in Tehran. The Iranians "didn't say yes and they didn't say no," said a senior European official.

Iranian officials have made clear in previous meetings that they want to keep the matter in the hands of the IAEA and not have it referred to the Security Council, where they fear that the United States would push for punitive sanctions.

The Tehran trip marks the first joint diplomatic venture by Britain, France and Germany since the Iraq war, when Britain sided with the United States, and France and Germany opposed it. The foreign ministers discussed their trip with their U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, but did not ask for or receive American approval, one European official said.

The United States and Europe have jointly warned of the proliferation threat a nuclear-armed Iran would represent. But EU diplomat said the prospect of an agreement in Tehran vindicated the European policy of remaining engaged with the country's government. "We have diplomatic relations with Iran, which the Americans do not, so we can engage in all levels -- politically, diplomatically, economically," the diplomat said. "It's a real success for our engagement policy instead of the American confrontation policy."

Britain's Straw has made five trips to Tehran in the past two years.

"The United States itself is not prepared to engage in any negotiation with Iran," said Gary Samore, a nuclear proliferation expert with the London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies. "But I think the U.S. is happy to have the Europeans try to do it. It's sort of a good-cop, bad-cop."

During their stay here, the ministers will also meet with Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and Hassan Rouhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council and a key figure in military affairs.

The Iranian government has voiced positive signals in the last two days, since holding talks Friday with ElBaradei. On Monday, one Iranian oil official was quoted by Randa Takieddine, a reporter with the London-based Al Hayat newspaper, as saying that Iran would sign a deal when the three foreign ministers arrived in Tehran.

Over the weekend, Khatami also sounded optimistic, telling reporters in Tehran, "We will do what is necessary to solve the problems, and in return we're expecting our rights to be preserved, which is [the right] to have nuclear technology."

Diplomats and Iran-watchers said dropping the uranium-enrichment program would be particularly tough for Khatami, a reformist who is often at odds with conservative clerics. But making a deal with the Europeans rather than the Americans would be a politically acceptable way to back off while preserving Iran's nuclear technology ambitions, they said.

Some analysts said conservative forces in Iran also feared that the United States could use the IAEA inspections as cover for espionage, and that inspectors would make "incessant demands" that would impinge on Iranian sovereignty.

The European initiative essentially bypassed the IAEA, which has been trying since February to persuade Iran to disclose its nuclear secrets. On Thursday, when ElBaradei arrived in Tehran for high-level talks on nuclear issues, advance teams from the three European countries were already at work in the Iranian capital.

ElBaradei was briefed on the initiative the same day, and he expressed general support for what the Europeans were attempting, officials with the U.N. agency said.

Russia is now the main supplier of nuclear technology to Iran, and one European official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the IAEA did not consider Russia "100 percent reliable" in enforcing safeguards against proliferation. If France, Germany and Britain replaced Russia, this official said, the IAEA could be more certain that technology would not be illicitly used for arms production. "If we Europeans could be the supplier, that totally changes the equation," this official said.

Richburg reported from Paris. Staff writer Joby Warrick in Washington contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A56223-2003Oct20.html>

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Philippines 'Bio-Terror' Fear

from BBC News on Monday, October 20, 2003

Scientists in the Philippines are examining a suspicious substance that was found along with a suspected biological weapons manual in a militant hide-out. The materials were discovered when security forces raided a building in the southern Philippine city of Cotabato on Sunday.

They were searching for members of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) - a group of militant Muslims in South East Asia thought to have connections with al-Qaeda.

No arrests were made, but up to eight people are thought to have fled before police arrived.

Several canisters of unidentified chemicals were retrieved from the building, along with bomb making materials.

Deputy Chief of Staff, Rodolfo Garcia, said there were residues of what the authorities suspected could be a chemical carrying the tetanus bacteria.

He also said that documents were being examined including one that "details some bio-terror manuals or something to that effect."

The house raided on Sunday is just a few kilometres from a hotel where Taufik Rifqi, believed to be a senior Indonesian JI operative, was arrested on 2 October.

His detention was announced on Saturday just hours before US President George W Bush arrived for a brief visit on Sunday.

Less than a week before Mr Bush's visit, the man suspected of being the top JI figure in the Philippines, Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi, was killed in a shootout with police in Cotabato.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/3206790.stm>

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Combating Bioterrorism: Actions Needed to Improve Security at Plum Island Animal Disease Center.

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<http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-847> (Actual Report)

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