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## **Weeklong delay on ricin threat draws scrutiny**

Posted Friday, October 24, 2003 - 9:43 pm

By Tim Smith and Andy Paras

STAFF WRITERS

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Local, state and federal authorities knew that a package labeled as containing a deadly poison was found in a Greenville postal distribution center but did not inform the public or other emergency agencies for a week. The Greenville County Coroner, Emergency Management Services, the governor and people outside the top command of the Greenville County Sheriff's Office were not told immediately that authorities suspected ricin, a poison that in small amounts can kill a man within two days, had been found in the facility off Pelham Road. The postal center was not closed until a week after the package was found.

"Do we know there hasn't been something else that's come through?" asked Alberta Colley, 42, who works at New South Communications in downtown Greenville. "Officials have a responsibility to tell us."

Two state senators said the public should have been told sooner and a third senator who serves on the state's counter-terrorism task force said he believes the public should be notified "immediately" of any such threat.

Officials with the FBI, State Law Enforcement Division and the Greenville County Sheriff's Office — all of which played a role in the investigation — said they walk a fine line between telling people what they need to know and scaring people unnecessarily.

"We didn't know anything," said Gerald McKiernan, a spokesman for the postal service. "We isolated the package. Until we knew the results, there wasn't anything to say."

Greenville County Sheriff Steve Loftis said deputies did not know whether the package was a hoax. He said his office learned the substance was ricin just hours before the public did. When anthrax scares were publicized, deputies received more than 200 calls "out of panic," he said.

"It's not like we were trying to keep it secret," he said. "We just wanted to be sure we knew what we were talking about."

But U.S. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, who is running for the Democratic nomination for president, said the handling of the incident was "troubling" and called for the General Accounting Office to investigate.

"Have we learned nothing from the anthrax attacks of two years ago?" he asked. "By now it should be second nature for the Postal Service to protect the health of its employees and for law enforcement and public health agencies to move as quickly as possible."

Mark Saunders, a U.S. Postal Service spokesman, said late Friday the service will respond to Lieberman's remarks next week.

U.S. 4th District Rep. Jim DeMint of Greenville accused Lieberman of politicizing the issue by acting as though the post office is not doing what it's supposed to.

"My concern is that at the local and state level that we may not have the technical capability to quickly review and analyze contents of materials and I think that's the question here," he said. "Not whether the post office isolated the package immediately and followed their procedure."

He said thousands of hoaxes strike post offices every year and they have procedures to immediately isolate any threat.

"I think there have been some legitimate questions asked of whether or not we could speed up the testing of materials," he said.

Officials publicly confirmed the discovery on Wednesday, a week after sheriff's deputies were summoned to the postal facility and given a package containing a letter and a sealed vial of the poison ricin. Written on the outside of the package, according to officials, were the words "caution - Ricin - poison."

The letter said ricin would be added to the water supply if new laws regulating the amount of sleep truckers get was not repealed. It was not terrorism, officials said.

Frank Eskridge, manager of engineering and operations at the Greenville Water System, declined to comment on what the company had done to protect the system's two reservoirs since the ricin was found because a criminal investigation is underway.

However, he said that before the incident, the water system had implemented security measures to mitigate the effects of an attack.

Loftis said his agency was notified about 11 hours after postal workers found the package. A deputy picked up the package, then took it in his squad car to an FBI agent who was traveling between Greenville and Columbia, Loftis said.

The FBI agent then handed it over to the State Law Enforcement Division, which tested the package to be sure the vial was not leaking, authorities said. The vial was kept at the Department of Health and Environmental Control over the weekend and then was sent by Federal Express to the Centers for Disease Control, said Lieberman.

Sandra Munoz, a FedEx spokeswoman, said she did not know the specifics of the ricin incident in Greenville but that FedEx has the expertise to ship hazardous materials to the CDC and frequently does as long as it is packaged and labeled according to federal guidelines.

The FBI has a lead role in the investigation, though it is being handled by the state's Joint Terrorism Task Force, which is made up of FBI and SLED agents, SLED Chief Robert Stewart said.

Loftis said he first learned CDC had confirmed the presence of ricin late Tuesday afternoon. He said his agency would have acted differently if there was any evidence that the package had leaked. Authorities have described the poison's container as a small, water-tight metal container.

"We took extra precautions," he said. "But in our minds, until we heard back from CDC, it was just a suspicious package."

Larry Jackson, spokesman for the U.S. Homeland Security Department, said each case of a suspicious package is handled differently based upon the circumstances.

The incident was handled much differently from the anthrax scare two years ago where any trace of white powder in a public building shut it down and the public was alerted almost immediately. Five people died from anthrax poisoning and a Maryland postal facility still hasn't reopened because of contamination.

The difference was officials believed the ricin, a poison 30 times deadlier than nerve gas, did not escape the vial found in the package at the processing center Oct. 15, said Bill Brown, a postal service spokesman.

"It was a completely sealed envelope," he said. "If it had leaked, we would have gone through the evacuation proceedings."

Brown said the public wasn't told because there was no threat to the public.

Sen. Mike Fair, a Greenville Republican, said while authorities must balance the public's right to know with the mission of law enforcement to catch those who send such poisons, the public should be told about the poison in a reasonable time.

"Law enforcement needs a window," he said. "But it needs to be shorter than a week."

Sen. Verne Smith, a Greer Republican, said officials should inform the public as soon as they know the substance is dangerous.

"People are hearing enough bad things to alarm them unnecessarily," he said, "But I think it's very important for people to know it as soon as they know what it is. Immediately after that information is available, it should be publicized."

Sen. John Courson, a Columbia Republican who serves on the state's terrorism task force, said the public has a right to be told right away.

"I think any time any agent - bacterial, biological or even nuclear - is discovered that presents a health hazard or threat to life, that information needs to be released immediately," he said.

DeMint, whose district includes the postal facility, said he was told about the discovery Wednesday afternoon. He said he was surprised it took so long for the public to be told.

"I think that is a legitimate question and something we need to look into," he said. "But at this point, it's probably premature to suggest somebody did not do something right."

House Speaker David Wilkins of Greenville said, "you have to balance and weigh the security of the public versus getting knowledge to the public."

He said he would defer to law enforcement officials to decide when to tell the public.

"I have nothing but the highest regard for how they handled this," he said.

Bruce Ransom, chairman of policy studies at Clemson University's Strom Thurmond Institute, said authorities have to weigh different concerns in deciding to reveal such a discovery.

"On one hand there is concern about public safety," he said, "but you don't want to create a panic."

Jay Hetherington, who worked as an operative for 33 years at the CIA and has taught terrorism and emergency response at Clemson for eight years, said the issue of telling the public "is a hard question."

"The principal issue is whether there is a specific danger to the public," he said. "I think the circumstances of the event should dictate whether there is public acknowledgment early on. In this case it was apparently well sealed. And if it was well sealed it can be handled just like any hazardous material."

Hetherington said he believes the ricin package should not have been handled by deputies but otherwise found no fault in the way officials dealt with the matter.

"It's a balance between the public's right to know things like this and the type of incident and the criminal investigation part of it," he said.

Will Folks, a spokesman for Gov. Mark Sanford, said the governor found out about the ricin the day before the public learned.

"The governor thinks folks should be notified as soon as a credible threat has been identified, based upon advice from public health and law enforcement professionals," he said.

Robert Boney, 41, said if the government didn't think it was a big deal, there was no reason to incite public panic.

"Perhaps they didn't realize it was a big deal," he said. "The way the government is, I doubt it was mishandled."

Greenville County EMS Capt. Bill Marcley said he didn't think they were ever officially notified but that it wouldn't have changed the precautions they already take.

"We just don't go in blindly, pick up a patient and go to the hospital," he said.

Greenville County Coroner Parks Evans, who said he was told Wednesday afternoon, also said it wouldn't have affected how they do their job.

"It would have been nice to know something was out there," he said, "but when they notified me that they knew this was actually what they had on their hands it was sufficient for our causes."

*Liv Osby and Jason Zacher contributed to this story.*

<http://greenvilleonline.com/news/2003/10/24/2003102417544.htm>

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# Congressional Trip To N. Korea Called Off

## *White House Objected to Visit to Nuclear Weapons Plant*

By Associated Press

A Republican congressman said yesterday that opposition from the White House caused him to scrub plans to lead a group of U.S. lawmakers to the site of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

"At the 11th hour, the White House withdrew its support for our bipartisan visit to North Korea," Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Pa.) said in a statement. It said yesterday's scheduled departure has been delayed temporarily.

KCNA, North Korea's official news agency, reported that the congressional delegation had notified Kim Jong Il's government Friday that the trip was canceled "due to the opposition of the White House."

A White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Bush had good discussions on his recent trip to Asia on moving forward with multinational diplomacy to persuade the North to end its nuclear weapons program. To try to keep the focus on that process, the official said, "we believe that a congressional delegation visit to North Korea at this time would not be appropriate."

Weldon is considered an expert on foreign policy matters, especially involving Russia, China and other former Cold War rivals such as North Korea.

He had planned to visit North Korea from Tuesday through Friday. He led a delegation there in late May, and said on his return that North Korea's government was ready to bargain about its weapons development program and nuclear stockpiles.

KCNA said North Korea had planned to invite Weldon's delegation to visit Yongbyon, North Korea's main nuclear complex. Weldon and his congressional colleagues would have been the first outsiders at the plant since North Korea threw out U.N. nuclear inspectors late last year.

"Discussions continue between our delegation and North Korean officials," Weldon said in his statement. "The members of the delegation still believe that a congressional visit will positively impact relations between our two nations."

North Korea said on Saturday it would consider Bush's offer of written security assurances in return for dismantling its nuclear weapons program.

A North Korean spokesman, quoted by KCNA, said his government was "ready to consider Bush's remarks on the 'written assurances of nonaggression' if they are based on the intention to coexist" and offer simultaneous actions.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21588-2003Oct26.html>

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Washington Post

October 26, 2003

Pg. 1

# Search In Iraq Fails To Find Nuclear Threat

## *No Evidence Uncovered Of Reconstituted Program*

By Barton Gellman, Washington Post Staff Writer

In their march to Baghdad on April 8, U.S. Marines charged past a row of eucalyptus trees that lined the boneyard of Iraq's thwarted nuclear dream. Sixty acres of warehouses behind the tree line, held under United Nations seal at Ash Shaykhili, stored machine tools, consoles and instruments from the nuclear weapons program cut short by the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

Thirty miles to the north and west, Army troops were rolling through the precincts of the Nasr munitions plant.

Inside, stacked in oblong wooden crates, were thousands of high-strength aluminum tubes.

That equipment, and Iraq's effort to buy more of it overseas, were central to the Bush administration's charge that President Saddam Hussein had resumed long-dormant efforts to build a nuclear weapon. The lead combat units had more urgent priorities that day, but they were not alone in passing the stockpiles by. Participants in the subsequent hunt for illegal arms said months elapsed without a visit to Nasr and many other sites of activity that President Bush had called "a grave and gathering danger."

According to records made available to The Washington Post and interviews with arms investigators from the United States, Britain and Australia, it did not require a comprehensive survey to find the central assertions of the Bush administration's prewar nuclear case to be insubstantial or untrue. Although Hussein did not relinquish his nuclear ambitions or technical records, investigators said, it is now clear he had no active program to build a weapon, produce its key materials or obtain the technology he needed for either.

Among the closely held internal judgments of the Iraq Survey Group, overseen by David Kay as special representative of CIA Director George J. Tenet, are that Iraq's nuclear weapons scientists did no significant arms-

related work after 1991, that facilities with suspicious new construction proved benign, and that equipment of potential use to a nuclear program remained under seal or in civilian industrial use.

Most notably, investigators have judged the aluminum tubes to be "innocuous," according to Australian Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Meekin, who commands the Joint Captured Enemy Materiel Exploitation Center, the largest of a half-dozen units that report to Kay. That finding is pivotal, because the Bush administration built its case on the proposition that Iraq aimed to use those tubes as centrifuge rotors to enrich uranium for the core of a nuclear warhead.

Administration officials interviewed for this report defended the integrity of the government's prewar intelligence and public statements. None agreed to be interviewed on the record. Vice President Cheney, in a televised interview last month, referred to a National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002, which said among other things that there was "compelling evidence that Saddam is reconstituting a uranium enrichment effort." Cheney said investigators searching for confirmation of those judgments "will find in fact that they are valid." His office did not respond to questions on Friday.

### **'Drain Pipe'**

No evidence mattered more to the nuclear debate than Iraq's attempt to buy aluminum tubes overseas. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, among many others, scorned the Baghdad government's explanation that it sought the tubes as artillery rocket casings. By August, news accounts made clear that the U.S. government's top nuclear centrifuge experts dissented strongly from the claim that the tubes were meant for uranium enrichment.

Meekin, whose remarks were supported by other investigators who said they feared the consequences of being quoted by name, is the first to describe the results of postwar analysis.

"They were rockets," said Meekin, 48, director general of scientific and technical assessment for Australia's Defence Intelligence Organisation, speaking by satellite telephone from Baghdad. "The tubes were used for rockets."

A U.S. government official, who was unwilling to be identified by name or agency, said Meekin is not qualified to make that judgment. The official did not elaborate. Kay's interim report this month said the question remains open. Participants in the Pentagon-directed special weapons teams, interviewed repeatedly since late last spring, noted that Kay's operation has taken no steps to collect the estimated 20,000 tubes in Iraq's inventory -- some badly corroded, but others of higher quality than the ones the U.S. government intercepted in Jordan three years ago and described as dangerous technology.

"If you told me they had access to these tubes and have chosen not to seize and destroy them, it undermines the judgment that these tubes are usable for, if not intended for, centrifuge development," said Robert Gallucci, dean of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, who retains his classified clearances and still consults with government analysts on Iraq.

Meekin said he no longer knows the whereabouts of the tubes once stacked at Nasr. "They weren't our highest priority," he said. "The thing's innocuous." Unguarded, the tubes "could be in arms plants, scattered around, being grabbed by looters, perhaps in scrap metal yards."

Scavengers, he said, most likely have "sold them as drain pipe."

### **Three Fates**

The day Marines and Army mechanized troops marched past the remnants of Iraq's nuclear past, Baghdad's three most important nuclear weapons scientists met three distinct fates.

Mahdi Obeidi, chief of the pre-1991 centrifuge program to enrich uranium, sat anxiously at home awaiting U.S. investigators. Jaffar Dhaj Jaffar, who directed alternative enrichment efforts and other component designs under the code name Petrochemical Three, watched the U.S.-led coalition's invasion from the United Arab Emirates, to which he had decamped before fighting began. Khalid Ibrahim Said, the principal overseer of Iraq's nuclear warhead designs, drove incautiously through a newly established U.S. checkpoint. He died in a burst of gunfire from Marines.

A short and pugnacious man, unpopular among his Iraqi contemporaries, Said had been less forthcoming than the other two men in contacts with U.N. inspectors from 1991 to 1998. His loss struck a blow to U.S. occupation authorities, because there were unanswered questions about his portion of the 1991 "crash program" to build a bomb.

Said was believed to have kept comprehensive records of his work, including design details and assembly diagrams, on optical disks. Iraq delivered much of its information to inspectors in electronic form, and it did so again in its seven-volume report of Dec. 3, 2002, titled "Currently Accurate, Full and Complete Declaration of the Past Nuclear Program." That report, a copy of which has been made available to The Washington Post, was not thought to include all the technical details in Iraq's possession.

Kay said this month that Iraq took "steps to preserve some technological capability from the pre-1991 nuclear weapons program." If true, that would represent a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, but would fall far short of a resumption of illegal development.

"Everybody, including Donald Rumsfeld, agrees the program was destroyed 12 years ago," said one U.S. expert with long experience on Iraq. "The question for David [Kay] is whether it restarted." Jaffar, who remains under the protection of the UAE government, agreed to voluntary interviews with U.S. and British investigators. Those familiar with his statements said he was combative, telling the Americans -- as he did during years of U.N. inspections -- that there was no hidden nuclear weapons program. Iraq, he said, never resumed the effort after U.S. bombs destroyed the Tuwaitha reactors during the Gulf War, and the International Atomic Energy Agency dismantled enrichment and design facilities over the next five years.

### **The Rose Garden**

It was Obeidi's former program -- the use of centrifuges to enrich uranium -- that the Bush administration maintained had been resurrected. Obeidi had heard the public statements, according to two close associates, and he waited with growing anxiety for arriving troops to knock at his door.

Anxiety turned to puzzlement when they did not. After two weeks, the Iraqi scientist turned to an unlikely source of help: David Albright, a U.S. nuclear expert and cordial antagonist during Albright's years as a consultant to the IAEA. One of the first things Obeidi told Albright, by the American's account, was that he had read Albright's published writings closely in the mid-1990s to learn which of Iraq's cover stories was working.

On May 1, Albright began looking for someone in the Defense Department or U.S. Central Command who would talk to Obeidi, "but I was rebuffed." Six days later, he reached a contact in the CIA. Obeidi had important information, Albright said, and wanted to come clean.

The first meeting with the CIA, on May 17, did not go well. Obeidi wanted assurance of asylum in the United States. The interviewers were noncommittal and appeared to know little about Obeidi or the centrifuge program, according to interviews with Albright and contemporaneous notes he provided in July.

On June 2, Obeidi led investigators to his rose garden. There they dug up a cache he had buried 12 years before and kept from U.N. inspectors: about 200 blueprints of gas centrifuge components, 180 documents describing their use and samples of a few sensitive parts. The parts amounted to far less than one complete centrifuge, and nothing like the thousands required for a cascade of the spinning devices to enrich uranium, but the material showed what nearly all outside experts believed -- that Iraq had preserved its nuclear knowledge base.

The next day, U.S. Special Forces burst into Obeidi's home and arrested him -- a misunderstanding, the CIA later explained. Shortly after Obeidi's release, on June 17, the CIA made public his identity and described the rose garden cache as proof that Iraq had the secret nuclear program that the Bush administration alleged.

But that, according to sources familiar with Obeidi's account in detail, is not quite what he told his interviewers.

### **Joe's Return**

According to close associates, Obeidi expected to speak to a peer among U.S. centrifuge physicists. He was dismayed, they said, to find that his principal interrogator lacked those credentials.

The man's name was Joe. An engineer with expertise in export controls, Joe made his reputation at the CIA as the strongest proponent of the theory that Iraq's controversial aluminum tubes were part of a resurgent centrifuge program. The CIA asked that Joe's last name be withheld to protect his safety.

In his interviews, Obeidi did not tell Joe what he wanted to hear, U.S. government officials said. Instead, Obeidi confirmed the account laid out in Volume 7 of Iraq's December nuclear disclosure, which said there had been "no nuclear activity since 1991" at seven of the program's previous sites and only "medical, agricultural and industrial" activities at the others.

The centrifuge program died in 1991, Obeidi said, and never resumed. He had buried the documents to prepare for resumption orders that never came. He had nothing to do with the aluminum tubes, he said, and a centrifuge program would have no use for them.

Obeidi's account corresponded closely with the history laid out in Volume 3 of Iraq's official history, which covered enrichment. The program began in 1988, under the designation Al Furat or 1200C, with a design based on rotors made of maraging steel. The following year Obeidi added an alternative design, using a more sophisticated rotor made of carbon fiber. In July 1990, a prototype system succeeded for the first time in separating the desired isotope of uranium from the gas uranium hexafluoride.

If Iraq had in fact revived its enrichment program, it would have needed a fluorine plant to convert uranium ore to that gaseous form and an intricate system of magnets, bearings and pipes to connect thousands of rotors in cascades. Kay's investigators, allied officials said, have found none of those things.

The physics of a centrifuge would not permit a simple substitution of aluminum tubes for the maraging steel and carbon fiber designs used by Obeidi. The tubes in Obeidi's design were also specified at 145mm in diameter; the aluminum tubes measured 81mm.

Joe sent dispatches to Washington over the summer accusing Obeidi of holding back the truth, according to a U.S. official who read one. The Iraqi scientist, fearful of his safety after being named in public, moved with his family to a CIA safe house in Kuwait. For months, he remained in limbo.

"They're just in a conflict of interest," Albright said in a July interview, speaking of Joe and other CIA analysts.

"Their bosses are [still] saying the tubes are for centrifuges."

By summer's end, under unknown circumstances, Obeidi received permission to bring his family to an East Coast suburb in the United States. He declined through intermediaries to be interviewed, and a government official asked that his location not be published. Albright, who hopes to employ Obeidi at his Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, is no longer willing to discuss the case.

### **Book of the Month Club**

At Hussein's former palace complex in Abu Ghurayb, lush by Baghdad standards with two small artificial lakes, frustrated members of the nuclear search team by late spring began calling themselves the "book of the month club." "There's a lot of guys over there read more novels than they will the rest of their lives," said a recently returned investigator, speaking on condition of anonymity. "You've got some bored people over there, big time."

Nuclear investigators had come with expectations set by Bush and Cheney, who gave rhetorical emphasis to Iraq's nuclear threat in their most compelling arguments for war. At least four times in the fall of 2002, the president and his advisers invoked the specter of a "mushroom cloud," and some of them, including Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, described Iraq's nuclear ambitions as a threat to the American homeland.

On the ground in Iraq, one investigator said, the nuclear investigation began as and remained "the least significant of the missions." The resources, personnel and operational pace of the nuclear team, he said, "were minuscule compared to chem and bio," a reference to chemical and biological weapons probes.

Fewer than one-tenth of 1 percent of the search personnel had nuclear assignments, about a dozen out of 1,500 at the peak strength of the Iraq Survey Group. In the immediate postwar period, investigators had about 600 leads in an "integrated master site list," of which the U.S. Central Command identified a "Top 19 WMD," for weapons of mass destruction. Only three of those were nuclear-related: Ash Shaykhili Nuclear Facility, the Baghdad New Nuclear Design Center and the Tahadi Nuclear Establishment.

"There really wasn't a need for our specialized area of work," Navy Cmdr. David Beckett said in a recent interview. In Iraq, Beckett commanded a group of nuclear-trained Special Forces known as the Direct Support Team. Now program manager for special nuclear programs at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Beckett said the aluminum tubes and machine tools cited in the October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate -- vacuum tubes, industrial magnets and balancing machines -- were "not a big focus" of his work in Iraq. He added, "To be honest, I've read more about that since I got back."

An administration official, defending the CIA's prewar analysis, said its message had been widely misunderstood. "The term 'reconstituting' means restoring to a former condition, a process often inferred to be short term," he said. "Based on reporting, however, Saddam clearly viewed it as a long-term process. So did the NIE."

### **Fertile Ground**

Meekin, the Australian general who had principal responsibility for collecting Iraqi military technology, said his 500-member unit is disbanding, its work largely done. According to U.S. government officials, some of Kay's leading nuclear investigators have already left Iraq. Nuclear physicist William Domke, who ran the centrifuge investigation, returned last month to his intelligence post at the Energy Department's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. Jeffrey Bedell, Domke's counterpart at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, has also come home. Domke and Bedell, according to people who know their work, confirmed their prewar analysis that the tubes were not suited for centrifuges and that Iraq had no program to use them as such. They had seen the tubes in December and January, on temporary assignment for the IAEA in Iraq. They were also principal authors of the Energy Department's dissent from the National Intelligence Estimate of October 2002.

Neither man replied to messages left by voice mail and e-mail. Steve Wampler, a spokesman at Livermore, said, "They really don't talk about their work." A U.S. government official, speaking for the administration but declining to be named, denied that the two physicists had reached final conclusions. "Domke may be coming back soon," the official said. "Their work is not completed."

Tim McCarthy, an experienced U.N. inspector who returned to Iraq late last month to join Kay's team, said in an interview before departing that the Iraqi rocket program based on 81mm tubes had been known to Western analysts "well before 1996." McCarthy said inspectors gave the tubes "maybe three minutes out of 100 hours" of attention because they did not appear to be important.

Meekin said the Nasr 81 rocket "appeared in a public arms show in 1999" at which Iraqi munitions were displayed for sale. Such sales would have been illegal under U.N. Security Council sanctions, but hardly secret. Meekin said trade magazines covered the show.

Partly for those reasons, the American-led search teams did not even visit Nasr until July. Iraqi Brig. Gen. Shehab Haythem showed them around, the tubes laid out in neat rows. Investigators sent samples to the Sandia National Laboratories in New Mexico and left the rest.

Today, Ash Shaykhili is a hulk. What it contained, apart from demolished remnants of the 1991 program, was exactly the kind of equipment that the CIA cited as part of its compelling case for Iraq's nuclear threat: "magnets, high-speed balancing machines, and machine tools."

"They're not acting as if they take their own analysis seriously," said Joseph Cirincione, director of the nonproliferation project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "If they were so worried about these tubes, that would be the kind of sensitive equipment you'd think the administration would want to seize, to prevent it from going somewhere else -- Iran, Syria, Egypt."

The investigation to date, Meekin said, suggests that Iraqi efforts to obtain dangerous technology since 1991 met with modest success at best.

"By and large, our judgment is that sanctions have been pretty good, or the sanctions effort, to prevent the import of components," he said. In the realm of nuclear proliferation, he said, "I guess there's more fertile ground in North Korea or Iran."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A17707-2003Oct25.html>

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London Sunday Telegraph

October 26, 2003

## **Pentagon Wants 'Mini-Nukes' To Fight Terrorists**

By Julian Coman, in Washington

Influential advisers at the Pentagon are backing the development of a new generation of low-yield nuclear weapons - so-called mini-nukes - in a controversial report to be published this autumn.

The document, entitled Future Strategic Strike Force, has been produced by the Defence Science Board, which has a Pentagon brief to "transform the nation's armed forces to meet the demands placed on them by a changing world order".

The DSB's findings envisage a revamped nuclear arsenal made up of small-scale missiles whose explosive impact would be easier to control and could be targeted at smaller aggressive states. The most radical part of the report argues for a move away from the Cold War view of nuclear arms as catastrophic weapons of last resort.

The document is believed to have the strong backing of Donald Rumsfeld, the defence secretary, who last week called for a "bolder" approach to national security in a leaked Pentagon memo. A month ago the Senate eased restrictions on nuclear tests at the military's Nevada site, where no new test has taken place since 1992.

Privately, Defence Department officials describe it as the logical development of the Pentagon's 2002 nuclear posture review, which urged a renewed role for nuclear weapons in American military strategy.

One former Pentagon official said of the DSB report: "The authors are saying that cumbersome Cold War-style weapons are no longer appropriate in an era when one superpower is dealing with a number of terrorist threats and smaller, hostile states. Enemies of the United States can gamble on them never being used."

America's nuclear capability from the Cold War is described in the report, which has been leaked to a specialist defence magazine, as "not adequate to future national security needs". It proposes steps to make US nuclear weapons "relevant to the threat environment" in the era of the war on terrorism.

Among the weapons programmes proposed is an enhanced neutron bomb, capable of destroying deeply buried biological weapons caches, and "nuclear bunker-busters" that can threaten terrorist cells and hidden weapons of mass destruction. Military officers familiar with the DSB study say that it states that smaller nuclear weapons, causing less collateral damage, would constitute a more "credible" threat to adversaries than traditional atomic missiles.

"Brutally, 'mini-nukes' would be easier to use, and therefore more useful as a deterrent," said the former Pentagon official.

Any resumption of testing or the development of new nuclear weapons in the US would cause consternation among America's allies, particularly in Japan. The mayor of Hiroshima, Tadatoshi Akiba, expressed his concern this month that "the policy of the United States has now shifted towards something that will be used".

Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, has told senior American diplomats that developing new weapons could encourage other countries to violate the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

"This is extremely serious," said Arjun Makhijani, the president of the Washington-based Institute of Energy and Environmental Research, which has produced a study of the Bush administration's developing nuclear weapons strategy. "The appeal to deterrence is a smokescreen. The desire is to develop nuclear weapons that can actually be used. The United States is in danger of being at the leading edge of proliferation."



The DSB document is the latest signal that the Bush administration is preparing to modernise its nuclear programme. In September the Senate passed a White House-backed plan to reduce the preparation time required for nuclear testing in Nevada. George Bush Snr had imposed a moratorium in 1992.

At the time of the Senate vote Jon Kyl, a Republican senator, argued that tests were likely to be needed given the nuclear ambitions of countries such as North Korea and Iran. "We've had a self-imposed moratorium on testing," said Mr Kyl. "Has it stopped other countries? No. It shows a failed strategy."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=%2Fnews%2F2003%2F10%2F26%2Fwnuke26.xml>

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New York Times  
October 25, 2003

## **C.I.A. Disputes Accusations That Its Prewar Conclusions On Iraq Arms Were Flawed**

By Douglas Jehl

WASHINGTON, Oct. 24 — The Central Intelligence Agency responded angrily on Friday to new Congressional criticism of its handling of prewar intelligence about Iraq's suspected illicit weapons program. At a briefing at C.I.A. headquarters, four senior intelligence officials said that a top-secret internal review now underway had found no evidence of faulty work.

"What it has shown us is that the judgments were not only sound, they were very sound, and backed up by more than one source," a senior intelligence official said of the review, which is being conducted under orders from George J. Tenet, the director of central intelligence.

The briefing was organized in response to a report in The Washington Post that said the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was preparing to issue a report saying that intelligence agencies made serious errors of judgment in their prewar conclusion that Iraq possessed chemical and biological weapons and was reconstituting its nuclear program. In an angry public statement, the C.I.A. spokesman, Bill Harlow, said that any such finding would be premature. Mr. Harlow said that top intelligence officials had not yet been given an opportunity to share their own findings with members of the intelligence committee.

"The committee has yet to take the opportunity to hear a comprehensive explanation of how and why we reached our conclusions," the statement said. Congressional officials said that the detailed review by the Senate committee had indeed turned up indications of serious errors. But Senator Pat Roberts, the Kansas Republican who is the panel's chairman, issued a statement saying that the committee was nowhere near to completing its review and that it would hear from Mr. Tenet and others before reaching any findings.

The senior intelligence officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, as they outlined findings from a 405-page review being conducted by the National Intelligence Council, said David Kay, the American heading the search for illicit weapons in Iraq, would ultimately determine if the C.I.A. had been right.

"We don't think what we did was deficient, we don't think it was sloppy, and we're waiting to see what David finds to see whether we got it right," a senior official said. In an interim report this month, Mr. Kay said his team had not yet found any chemical, biological or nuclear weapons in Iraq. The search is to be completed sometime next year. Over the course of two hours, the senior intelligence officials sought to rebut comments by Senator Roberts and others claiming that the intelligence agencies' conclusions in an October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate had been based on incomplete and circumstantial evidence.

"When you get all done parsing this, what you find is a compelling case that no reasonable person could have concluded anything other than what we have" about Iraq's weapons program, based on the information available at the time, a second senior intelligence officials said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's review is the most extensive effort by Congress now underway to reconcile the failure to find illicit weapons in Iraq with unambiguous claims by the administration and intelligence agencies that Iraq had at least chemical and biological weapons in its arsenal before the American invasion in March. The review is expected to form the basis of a public report that Republicans who control the committee hope to issue later this year.

But Congressional officials said the timing and nature of the conclusions may be affected by opposition from Democrats. The Democrats say the committee still has not been able to review evidence that might shed light on the possible misuse of intelligence by Bush administration officials, as opposed to errors made by intelligence analysts. The Democrats fear that Senator Roberts and other Republicans on the panel want to blame the C.I.A. for producing faulty intelligence on Iraq to shield President Bush and his top advisers from charges that they exaggerated the Iraqi threat.

The nature of the committee's findings was first reported in Friday's editions of The Washington Post, which attributed to Senator Roberts a statement that the review was "95 percent complete."

But by late afternoon, after the C.I.A. and the ranking Democrat on the committee, Senator John D. Rockefeller IV of West Virginia, issued statements on Friday questioning how the panel could have reached such a conclusion, Senator Roberts said that his statements had been mischaracterized.

"The committee has not finished its review of the intelligence and has not reached any final conclusions or finished a report," Senator Roberts said. He said he had agreed that Mr. Tenet "should have an opportunity" to speak to the committee "before the report is finalized."

Still, a congressional official who was authorized to speak about the highly classified review said on Friday that "some initial concerns and issues" that have emerged from the committee review "may not be positive for the intelligence community."

Senator Roberts has said that he is deeply troubled by signs that intelligence agencies made mistakes in their prewar findings, most notably in an October 2002 intelligence estimate produced over a period of less than three weeks at the request of the Senate intelligence committee.

Congressional officials reflecting the view of the committee's Republicans have said that its review had concluded that many of the findings reached by the C.I.A. and other agencies in that document were unfounded and based on circumstantial and contradictory evidence. But Senator Rockefeller told reporters on Capitol Hill on Friday that the review was "far from complete" and that a committee report "cannot possibly be finished before the end of the year." In a hint of the partisan discord on the committee, Senator Rockefeller said he believed that Senator Roberts "wants to put this to bed as soon as possible," while he himself believed that the review should be completed "honorably and fairly."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/25/international/middleeast/25INTE.html>

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Los Angeles Times

October 29, 2003

Pg. 1

## **Intelligence Veteran Faults Iraq Arms Data**

By Sonni Efron and Greg Miller, Times Staff Writers

WASHINGTON — The newly retired head of the State Department's intelligence arm said Tuesday that the U.S. intelligence community "badly underperformed" for years in assessing Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and should accept responsibility for its failure.

The assessment by Carl W. Ford Jr., former assistant secretary of State for intelligence and research, marked the first time a senior official involved in preparing the prewar assessments on Iraq has asserted that serious intelligence errors were made.

Before the war, the intelligence community concluded that Iraq possessed biological and chemical weapons and that Saddam Hussein had restarted a nuclear weapons program. After nearly six months of occupation, no such weapons have been discovered.

The intelligence community "has to bear the major responsibility for WMD information in Iraq and other intelligence failures," Ford said in two interviews with The Times. The Vietnam veteran worked for years in U.S. military intelligence, the CIA and the Defense Department and retired Oct. 3. "We badly underperformed for a number of years," he added, "and the information we were giving the policy community was off the mark."

Ford could not pinpoint what had gone wrong, but the question, he said, must be answered.

The entire intelligence community — including Ford and the bureau he ran — should have done a better job of ferreting out the truth about Iraq's capabilities, he said. The first step in improving the performance of the agencies, he added, is to admit error.

"It's sort of like the first step in a 12-step program," he said. "You have to have that moment of clarity to realize that you've got a problem. We in the community have not yet accepted that we have a problem. The worst thing, for me, is we could do better.... We can do far better with the people, the leadership and the money we've got. It's the lost opportunities I find troubling."

Ford's comments contrast sharply with the defiant statements by other senior administration officials, including President Bush.

At a news conference Tuesday, Bush defended the intelligence on Iraq and noted that much of it preceded his taking office.

"We took action based upon good, solid intelligence," Bush said. "It was the right thing to do to make America more secure and the world more peaceful."

CIA Director George J. Tenet has vigorously defended the community's performance and disputed any suggestion that its prewar conclusions were wrong.

Tenet has apologized for allowing discredited allegations about Hussein seeking uranium from Africa — supposedly for nuclear weapons — to be included in Bush's State of the Union address.

But recently, agency officials said that an exhaustive internal review nearing completion validates their work on Iraq and has yet to turn up any evidence that their prewar conclusions were flawed.

Asked for comment on Ford's remarks Tuesday, CIA spokesman Bill Harlow said: "It is entirely premature to reach conclusions about the accuracy of prewar judgments about the status of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction efforts. The difficulty in locating highly compartmented, secret weapons programs in a country that was extensively bombed and looted should not be underestimated."

Harlow said that while the agency awaits the conclusions of David Kay, the chief U.S. weapons hunter in Iraq, who is writing a report on his findings, "we continue to believe that the work of the intelligence community on Iraq WMD was solid."

Contrary to charges by some critics that the Bush administration politicized the intelligence, Ford argued that the intelligence community — a collection of agencies including the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency and Ford's bureau at the State Department — cannot blame its failure on pressure from the administration.

Analysts "are trained almost from birth" how to deal with political pressure to tailor their conclusions to bolster policymakers' views, Ford said in two lengthy telephone interviews. "We push back on political pressure ... and the only problem is when there's a weasel in the intelligence community who does not have the backbone and starts giving the policymakers what they want to hear."

Ford said he suspected there may have been such "weasels," analysts who succumbed to the very human temptation to find evidence to support the prevailing political view. If so, Ford said that he does not know who they were.

"I certainly wouldn't say that key members of the intelligence community leadership that I worked with were weasels," Ford said.

Nevertheless, "when you have policymakers going astray as they did on Iraq, the principal problem has to be with intelligence. If somebody gives them bad information, nothing but bad can happen after that ... and the intelligence community gave them bad information."

Though there were dissenters, their views were ignored, Ford said. "The majority view prevailed, and that [view] was wrong."

The Bureau of Intelligence and Research, known as INR, functions as an independent intelligence analysis agency inside the State Department.

Unlike the CIA or most other agencies, it does not have employees, satellites or sensors collecting raw data. But it does have its own experts on regions and issues who perform separate analyses of information gathered by others. INR prides itself on being fiercely independent and has repeatedly lived up to that reputation during the debate over Iraq by dissenting from the views of other intelligence agencies.

Some in the intelligence community reacted to Ford's remarks with a roll of the eyes, saying INR is often resentful of not being a central player and relishes second-guessing other agencies.

Others said Ford is known for his forthright manner and independent streak.

"Carl's always been that kind of guy, the contrarian," said one intelligence official who asked not to be identified.

"He sees himself as an honest broker. I see him as reliable. I trust him. But he also worked for INR ... a bureau populated by individuals who have made a career out of giving the benefit of the doubt to the nation in question, which is not usually the United States."

Ford stressed that his criticism was not meant to trumpet INR or jab any other agency. "Even INR didn't get it right. We were just slightly more critical of the evidence," he said.

The National Intelligence Estimate produced last fall asserted that "Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons" and "probably will have a nuclear weapon in this decade."

INR dissented in a footnote, arguing that there was inadequate evidence to support the conclusion that Baghdad started reconstituting its nuclear program around 1998, when United Nations weapons inspectors left Iraq.

Ford's former subordinate in INR took a sharper stance, arguing that the CIA and the administration should both admit error.

"The intelligence community did not do a good job on a number of critical issues, but the senior political leadership is even more blameworthy," said Greg Thielmann, who retired last year as head of INR's Strategic, Proliferation, and Military Affairs Office.

"The intelligence community spun things to make [the Iraqi threat] a little more sensational than I would have ... but then the administration took that spin and put it into hypervelocity," Thielmann told The Times.

"It's up to CIA to explain how they blew it so badly, but CIA so far hasn't admitted they blew it," Thielmann said.

Sen. John D. "Jay" Rockefeller IV (D-W.Va.), vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, described Ford's comments as "extraordinary" and said they represent the sort of cold assessment the community needs if it is to reform.

But Rockefeller stressed that Ford's mea culpa should not shield policymakers from scrutiny.

He said, for example, it was the White House, not the intelligence community, that tried to connect Iraq to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks — although such a link has never been proved.

It is increasingly clear that much of the intelligence "was not accurate," Rockefeller said. "But I think a greater problem is whether it was shaped, whether it got that way because of influence or intimidation."

The House and Senate intelligence committees are conducting reviews of the prewar intelligence on Iraq and are expected to issue highly critical reports on the CIA's performance. The agency has complained that the committees are forming conclusions before its members have heard explanations from top CIA officials.

<http://www.latimes.com/la-fg-intel29oct29,1,1774814.story>

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New York Times  
October 29, 2003

## **Iraqis Removed Arms Material, U.S. Aide Says**

By Douglas Jehl

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 — The director of a top American spy agency said Tuesday that he believed that material from Iraq's illicit weapons program had been transported into Syria and perhaps other countries as part of an effort by the Iraqis to disperse and destroy evidence immediately before the recent war.

The official, James R. Clapper Jr., a retired lieutenant general, said satellite imagery showing a heavy flow of traffic from Iraq into Syria, just before the American invasion in March, led him to believe that illicit weapons material "unquestionably" had been moved out of Iraq.

"I think people below the Saddam Hussein-and-his-sons level saw what was coming and decided the best thing to do was to destroy and disperse," General Clapper, who leads the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, said at a breakfast with reporters.

He said he was providing a personal assessment. But he said "the obvious conclusion one draws" was that there "may have been people leaving the scene, fleeing Iraq, and unquestionably, I am sure, material." A spokesman for General Clapper's agency, David Burpee, said he could not provide further evidence to support the general's statement.

But other American intelligence officials said General Clapper's theory was among those being pursued in Iraq by David Kay, a former United Nations weapons inspector who is leading the American effort to uncover the weapons cited by the Bush administration as the major reason for going to war against Iraq.

General Clapper's comments came as the Central Intelligence Agency prepared to defend its prewar assertions that Iraq had chemical and biological weapons and that it sought to reconstitute its nuclear program. The director of central intelligence, George J. Tenet, has written a letter to the chairman and vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence saying the agency will be ready to provide an assessment by late November.

In the letter, the contents of which were described by several intelligence officials on Tuesday, Mr. Tenet proposed that a team headed by John McLaughlin, the deputy director of central intelligence, provide a briefing for the committee after Nov. 20, when the agency's internal review is expected to be completed.

General Clapper's agency is responsible for interpreting satellite photographs and other imagery. He declined to answer a question about whether he believed that illicit Iraqi weapons material might have been smuggled into any other country.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/29/politics/29WEAP.html>

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Wall Street Journal  
October 30, 2003

## **U.S. Presses China On Arms, Quietly**

*Political Realities Dilute Threat of Trade Sanctions Meant to Curb Proliferation*

By Susan V. Lawrence, Staff Reporter Of The Wall Street Journal

WASHINGTON -- In its effort to prevent China from spreading weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration has imposed trade sanctions against Chinese companies on nine occasions, the latest threatening to ban an annual \$12 billion in Chinese exports to the U.S. -- about a tenth of what China sold here last year. That is a very big stick, but it is unlikely the U.S. will ever fully use it, for reasons that show how political imperatives compromise even an administration as hard-line as President Bush's when it comes to national security. One reason is that administration officials disagree among themselves about just how big a proliferation problem Chinese companies are. Another is that sanctions of that magnitude would devastate the bilateral trade relationship and jolt the global-trading system, hurting U.S. companies that are part of Mr. Bush's political base. Furthermore, the U.S. needs China's diplomatic cooperation in other areas -- Iraq and North Korea among them -- and is unwilling to subordinate the larger bilateral relationship to the proliferation issue. Indeed, the subject wasn't even raised among U.S. and Chinese officials meeting this month at a regional forum in Thailand, where neither President Bush nor Chinese President Hu Jintao cited Chinese proliferation as a top bilateral issue at a joint news conference.

Bush officials portray compartmentalization of the issue as an accomplishment. Says one: "The real lesson we've learned is that the relationship with China is mature enough that we can whack 'em with a sanctions decision and in other areas you keep the discussion going."

Skeptics say insulating the relationship from proliferation issues weakens pressure on China's image-conscious leaders to rein in companies the U.S. accuses of spreading weapons. By contrast, the Clinton team used the stick of public shame, in addition to the carrot of waived sanctions, to negotiate changes in Chinese behavior, says Bates Gill, a China scholar at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Leading the Bush administration's antiproliferation effort is John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. His approach "is not about finger wagging in China's face and portraying China internationally as a bad actor," says Mr. Gill. "It is sanctions and we walk away. So I think the Chinese are less concerned about it, because it doesn't undermine the broad U.S.-China relationship and it doesn't undermine China's international image."

U.S. worries about China focus on its arms exports to Iran, part of Mr. Bush's "axis of evil," and Pakistan, officially a U.S. partner in the war against terrorism. Last year, China enacted comprehensive export controls for weapons of mass destruction, but administration officials can't agree on their significance.

"There's evidence that entities who are serial proliferators take those laws seriously, in that they are developing new and more sophisticated methods of skirting those laws," says a second administration official. "That's a good sign that people actually fear reprisals and fear being caught."

Others grouse about enforcement. Says the first official: "What you have to look for is evidence from the Chinese side that they are really cracking down, and we don't see that."

Recent sanctions have grown sharper teeth, a reason the official thinks China soon won't be able to ignore them. In May, the U.S. slapped two-year sanctions on one of China's biggest companies, state-owned China North Industries Corp., that could cost Norinco \$100 million annually in lost exports to the U.S. (Norinco says it doesn't sell banned weapons, and Beijing opposes the sanctions.) A new set of sanctions imposed in September against Norinco and the Chinese government extends by two years a ban on Chinese launches of U.S.-made satellites, potentially costing China hundreds of millions of dollars in fees.

Those sanctions also invoke but waive for a year penalties that the administration says could block as much as \$12 billion a year in Chinese exports to the U.S. They cover "all activities of the Chinese government affecting the development or production of electronics, space systems or equipment, and military aircraft." Robert Einhorn, who was President Clinton's assistant secretary of state for nonproliferation, has criticized the Bush approach to sanctions, yet calls the threat of them "valid and potentially useful."

But U.S. companies doing business with China are unlikely to stand for implementation of such a drastic measure. William A. Reinsch, president of the National Foreign Trade Council, which represents nearly 400 corporate members, says the effect on trade ties would be "cataclysmic." "You can't use a sledge hammer like this and expect to have no Chinese reaction when you do it, and my guys would be the losers when the Chinese react," he warns. Administration officials say the one-year waiver on the broader sanctions will almost certainly be extended, but having invoked the threat they may have trouble putting it back in its bottle without offending either big business or national-security hawks in Mr. Bush's party. "If they take it literally and seriously, they are going to really irritate the multinational business community," says Mr. Reinsch. "If they try to minimize it they are going to irritate their own right wing."

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## OLYMPICS

# Report Cites Bioterror Concerns

Wednesday, October 29, 2003; Page D02

Greek security forces are not ready to deal with the mass casualties that a chemical or biological attack could cause during the 2004 Olympics, according to confidential State Department analysis cited by a Greek newspaper.

In response, the Greek Public Order Ministry said its main focus is "prevention and deterrence of terrorist threats." The State Department report, reported by the To Vima newspaper, said Greek officials seem to think a biochemical attack could not happen.

Security planning does not "cover the response capabilities and the reserve capabilities" for a biochemical attack with "mass casualties [more than 1,000 victims] and damage," To Vima quoted the report as saying.

The report urged Greece to increase its supply of chemical antidotes and blood bank supplies, the newspaper reported.

To Vima did not say how it obtained the report, which it said was prepared after a September visit to Athens by a team of U.S. security advisers and then handed over to the Greek government. The copy received by the paper was in Greek.

The U.S. Embassy in Athens had no immediate comment on the report, but did not deny it was authentic.

Greek officials insisted Olympic security planning is complete and comprehensive. Government spokesman **Christos Protopappas** did not specifically comment on the report, but stressed that Greece will host a "safe and successful" Olympics.

Athens organizers this month announced a 25 percent boost in the security budget to \$755 million. But the U.S. report noted "no coordination" among various Greek agencies and first-response teams and stressed that "operational plans" were incomplete.

The United States is part of a seven-nation panel advising Athens on security for the Aug. 13-29 Games. The first major test of security operations and equipment is scheduled for December.

U.S. officials have said at least 100 security agents will accompany the country's team to the Olympics as part of a \$2.7 million special State Department security package. A U.S. Olympic Committee team, including security experts, is scheduled to visit Athens next month.

-- From News Services

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A32424-2003Oct28.html>

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# Scientist: Bioterror software should be marketed

Last Update: 10/27/2003 2:42:34 PM

By: Associated Press

(Albuquerque-AP) -- Sandia National Laboratories has developed a system that offers early warning of a biological weapons attack.

But the system is going nowhere while the lab squanders the chance to move it into widespread use.

So says Al Zelicoff, a former Sandia scientist who led the technology's development.

Zelicoff says Sandia has given exclusive rights of the technology to a small startup company founded by Greg Mann, a Sandia scientist who also worked on the technology.

And by doing so, Zelicoff says the lab missed a chance to work with WebMD to commercialize the program.

Mann says talks with WebMD broke down, in part, because of money and the realization of how complicated marketing such technology is.

The Rapid Syndrome Validation Project collects reports from doctors and searches them for symptoms that could be signs of a bioterror attack or disease outbreak.

<http://kobtv.com/index.cfm?viewer=storyviewer&id=5711&cat=HOME>

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Wednesday, October 29, 2003

# The yeast and the cockroach -- a spy tale

One infiltrates, the other collects data

By SUE VORENBERG

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Meet the future of biological and chemical espionage: yeast and cockroaches.

Odd as the combination sounds, it could be the building block of a new, inexpensive spy device -- one that could sneak into a building and sense chemicals or biological agents, said Jeff Brinker, a Sandia National Laboratories scientist and professor at the University of New Mexico.

"Cockroaches are robust -- they can go into environments that humans can't withstand," Brinker said. "You could attach a sensing device onto the back of a cockroach and send it into a place where you suspect they're making chemical weapons.

"If you can go in covertly, you can collect evidence without anyone getting spooked."

Who needs the CIA when you've got cockroaches? As for the sensing device, Brinker said, that would be made of yeast.

"Yeast functions like a canary in a coal mine," said Helen Baca, a doctoral student working with Brinker. "If yeast cells are exposed to dangerous chemicals, they change and die. You can actually genetically modify yeast cells so when something specific happens to them, they change color."

Brinker and Baca are creating genetically modified yeast cells that can stay alive for days attached to the back of a cockroach -- or a cockroach-sized robot.

"Inside each yeast cell is a marker that turns green if it is exposed to a particular chemical," Brinker said. "They have optical radar where you can shoot a beam at the cockroach, and if a chemical triggered any of the yeast cells, it would be able to see the green fluorescent marker."

Keeping the yeast sensors alive isn't all that easy. The cells need a constant supply of water and nutrients, which is hard to supply on the back of a cockroach.

So the scientists decided to encase the cells in Sol-Gel, an insulation material that Brinker has modified and improved since he came to Sandia Labs in 1979.

"The Sol-Gel creates an environment like a tiny reservoir that can store an influx of nutrients," he said. "It maintains the hydrated environment, and to our surprise we found the yeast actually seems to develop a symbiotic relationship with the host material."

In other words, the yeast appears to eat a portion of the Sol-Gel, and the Sol-Gel keeps the yeast alive.

"We've had it survive for three days that way," Baca said. "It looks like there's the potential for them to last a lot longer than that."

And she means longer as in hundreds of years. That's because yeast becomes dormant when it is deprived of water and nutrients.

While it couldn't be used as a sensor in its dormant state, a quick drop of nutrients could suddenly bring the yeast back to life for its next mission, Brinker said.

"These yeast sensors can be applied to things by all kinds of interesting techniques," he said. "We've created an ink jet cartridge for a printer that can print out arrays of yeast in Sol-Gel droplets."

A printed page of yeast sensors could be taped or glued to the back of a cockroach or robot. It might even be used in unusual medical devices.

Say the yeast is engineered to detect human disease. Then a doctor could print up a yeast card, have a patient breathe on it and determine what illness the person has, Brinker said.

[http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/145921\\_science29.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/145921_science29.html)

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