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CDC warns of potential for ricin poisoning

Nov 20, 2003 (CIDRAP News) – Because someone who recently mailed a container of ricin remains at large, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is urging health workers to be alert for possible cases of ricin poisoning.

An envelope containing a threatening note and a sealed container of ricin turned up at an airport mail-processing facility in Greenville, S.D., Oct 15. Until the perpetrator is found, "healthcare providers and public health officials must consider ricin to be a potential public health threat and be vigilant about recognizing illness consistent with ricin exposure," the CDC says in the Nov 21 issue of *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

The investigation in the South Carolina case found no environmental contamination at the postal facility and no ricin-related illnesses, according to the CDC. The report provides general information on ricin and discusses the clinical signs of illness, laboratory testing, and treatment.

Ricin is a toxin derived from castor beans. The report says processed and purified ricin can be spread by aerosol, contaminated food or water, or injection. (The perpetrator in the South Carolina case threatened to put ricin in water supplies, according to news reports at the time.) Ricin particles less than 5 microns in size can stay suspended in calm air for several hours, the article says.

Ricin poisoning can cause mild, severe, or fatal illness, the CDC notes. In moderate to severe illness due to ricin ingestion, vomiting and diarrhea typically lead to dehydration and possibly to hypovolemic shock.

There is no specific antidote for ricin, and it cannot be removed by dialysis, according to the article. The CDC recommends supportive treatment, including intravenous fluids and vasopressors for hypotension. If a patient may have ingested ricin and is not vomiting, a single dose of activated charcoal should be given as soon as possible. Gastric lavage is an option if it can be done within 1 hour after ingestion of the ricin. No existing tests can identify ricin in biological fluids, but a fluorescence immunoassay, available from the CDC and Laboratory Response Network labs, can detect it in environmental samples. All known or suspected cases of ricin exposure should be reported to the regional poison control center (1-800-222-1222) and local and state health departments, the CDC says.

<http://www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/content/bt/bioprep/news/nov2003ricin.html>

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Honolulu Advertiser
November 23, 2003

Guard's WMD Unit To Expand

By B.J. Reyes, Associated Press

The Hawai'i National Guard has received authorization to begin a pilot program to train teams that would be permanently deployed on remote Pacific islands to respond to threats posed by weapons of mass destruction, Maj. Gen. Robert Lee, the state adjutant general, said.

The goal is to have a team in place in the U.S. territories of Guam or the Northern Mariana Islands or another island nation that would be able to respond quickly to a threat in the region, Lee told delegates Friday at a homeland security summit in Honolulu.

Response teams also would be at the disposal of Adm. Thomas Fargo, commander of U.S. military forces in the Pacific, Lee said, noting that such response teams are only contained within the National Guard.

The authorization for the increased training was granted recently by Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard system, Lee said.

"When Lieutenant General Blum visited us a few months ago and he saw how we did homeland security, he said this is a model," Lee said. "When he talked with Admiral Fargo that beyond Hawai'i there's no such organization anywhere else in the Pacific, he gave us special authorization to increase that unit."

State officials, including Lee and Gov. Linda Lingle, say the Islands' homeland security preparedness measures have been lauded as among the best in the country.

They say the Islands' location, which often makes it an entry point into the United States from Asia and the Pacific, have forced all security agencies in Hawai'i to concentrate more heavily on such training.

The Hawai'i National Guard's weapons of mass destruction response team has 22 members. Lee said he was unsure how many more members would be added or what the financial impact would be because an evaluation still must be done on the region's needs.

Lee's announcement came on the final day of the inaugural Asia-Pacific Homeland Security Summit & Exposition, which brought together more than 600 delegates from 19 countries and territories in the region.

While events such as the summit are useful in talking strategy, Lee said the pilot program represents something tangible that Hawai'i can point to as proof of its expertise in the area of security.

"Besides just the talk and bringing everybody together, we can now train with the latest equipment on weapons of mass destruction and send teams out now to cover the other U.S. territories," he said.

Earlier Friday, Fargo stressed that security throughout the Asia-Pacific region would remain strong despite the shifting of resources.

The Pentagon this month announced plans to send 4,500 soldiers from the 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks on a one-year tour in Iraq starting in February, with another 3,500 soldiers heading to Afghanistan in April. This week, the Pentagon alerted 390 members of the Pacific Army Reserve 411th Engineer Battalion that they could go to Iraq as soon as January.

"When we move organizations like the 25th Infantry Division to Iraq and Afghanistan, I look for ways to compensate for that," Fargo told conference delegates, adding that more air and naval forces are likely to be brought into the region to compensate for the loss of the Schofield soldiers.

"Frankly, I have tremendous resources available to me," Fargo said. "Right now, we're involved in winning the peace in Iraq. My job, and of course the job of the secretary of defense, is to take a look at the different concerns throughout the world ... and decide where we need to place forces and where we might take risks."

Lingle also noted that the departure of some 8,000 troops also will have an economic effect on the Islands and that her administration is working on proposals to deal with the effects of the deployment.

<http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/article/2003/Nov/23/lh/l13a.html>

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Philadelphia Inquirer
November 24, 2003

U.S. Pushing Allies On Iran Nuclear Deal

It seeks a much tougher resolution from France, Britain and Germany over secret research.

By Louis Charbonneau, Reuters

VIENNA, Austria - The United States wants France, Germany and Britain to agree to warn Iran that it will be reported to the U.N. Security Council if any further violations of its nuclear obligations are uncovered, diplomats said yesterday.

The U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-member Board of Governors on Friday adjourned talks until Wednesday, to give diplomats a chance to revise a resolution drafted by the three European states condemning Iran's 18-year concealment of atomic research that could be arms-related.

Informal talks were to continue yesterday between the United States and the Europeans to toughen up the proposed IAEA resolution, two drafts of which the U.S. has rejected as too weak.

The Bush administration accuses Iran of having a secret nuclear weapons program. But the White House has dropped its demand that the resolution find Iran in noncompliance with the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and that Iran be reported to the Security Council for sanctions.

One Western diplomat yesterday said the United States was pushing for a "trigger mechanism" stating clearly that Iran would "be reported" to the council for any more breaches of the treaty.

The second draft of the resolution does contain such a trigger mechanism, but Washington rejected it as too vague and is helping draft a third. Diplomats said the Germans were afraid that a strong trigger would backfire and cause the Iranians to curtail cooperation with the IAEA.

Iran accused Washington of holding up the process of agreeing on an IAEA resolution. U.S. officials have said they would prefer no resolution to a weak one.

"The Americans, who failed to impose their views on the other members of the board, want to create tension and are now wasting time," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a weekly news conference in Tehran.

Iran denies wanting nuclear weapons, but has acknowledged hiding experiments with uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing from IAEA inspectors.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/nation/7335369.htm>

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London Terror Plot Reportedly Thwarted

The Associated Press

Saturday, November 22, 2003; 4:20 PM

LONDON - A chemical firm alerted authorities to a potential terrorist plot after a London-based group tried to buy half a ton of a toxic substance, a company spokesman said Saturday.

Amersham Biosciences grew suspicious when it received an order for 1,100 lbs of saponin in the fall of 2002, said the company's business development director, Lennart Arlinger.

Saponin enhances the transmission of molecules through biological cell membranes. When combined with a potent toxin such as ricin, it can ease the absorption of the poison through the skin, experts say.

Arlinger told The Associated Press that the large size of the order, which came from London, raised the company's suspicions, and that research showed the group trying to buy the goods had Islamic links. Amersham stopped the order and informed national authorities in Sweden, where the order was processed.

London's Metropolitan Police would not comment.

Arlinger said the company made it policy to "proactively consider the potential risk of misuse" of its products, "asking ourselves when peculiar orders are placed with us whether we actually should allow them to be delivered." Saponins, which can be toxic in high doses, are a family of natural detergents derived from plants with a variety of uses in industry and medicine. Digitalis, which is used to treat heart disease, is a saponin derived from the foxglove plant.

Early this year, several men were arrested and accused of plotting to produce a chemical weapon after police discovered traces of ricin - a highly toxic poison extracted from castor beans - in a north London apartment

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A6594-2003Nov22.html>

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New York Times
November 25, 2003
Pg. 1

Theft Of Cobalt In Iraq Prompts Security Inquiry

By John F. Burns

AMIRIYA, Iraq — A seeming lapse in surveillance by American forces has led to the looting of dangerously radioactive capsules from Saddam Hussein's main battlefield testing site in the desert outside Baghdad and the identification of at least one 30-year-old Iraqi villager, and possibly a village boy, as suffering from radiation sickness.

The two capsules, taken from a site once used by Mr. Hussein's government to test the effects of radiation on animals and perhaps humans, have since been recovered after an American sweep through the area.

But American officers fear that more cases of the sickness may follow, and that they will be powerless to help unless people in the villages of Amiriya and Shamiya break their silence and identify men who looted the desert site in early September.

Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the American commander in Iraq, has ordered an investigation to discover why an arc of eight 75-foot radioactive testing poles at the site was not more closely guarded after American nuclear experts filed a report to the Pentagon identifying them as dangerous after a visit to the site on May 9, American officers said. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has also taken a personal interest in the case.

Under investigation is how American surveillance of the area, now under the control of the 82nd Airborne Division, failed to spot villagers entering the testing site with heavy vehicles to dismantle three of the poles, or towers, for scrap, leaving heavy tire tracks in the desert.

One of the cobalt capsules was found by American troops on Oct. 6 lying in the yard of a villager's house in Amiriya, less than 15 feet from the outdoor clay oven the family used to bake bread.

The second capsule was found partly buried about 75 feet from a house in Shamiya, just east of Amiriya and about 10 miles north of the nuclear testing site, in a position where it, too, would have been approached by family members and neighbors. Along with the capsules, parts of the giant testing poles were found, dismantled for scrap metal.

"We've made every effort to unscramble this thing," said Lt. Col. George Krivo, a spokesman for the American command in Baghdad.

Looting of military depots has been a persistent problem since the fall of Mr. Hussein, prompting suggestions that the 130,000 American troops in Iraq may be too stretched.

The radioactive capsules, less than five inches high and shaped like stainless steel miniatures of the Apollo spacecraft's command module, contained thumbnail amounts of cobalt-60, a radiation source commonly used in X-ray machines and in other medical and industrial applications. The capsules were situated in concrete crypts at the base of the towers, and raised on cables into the towers to create an irradiated environment on the simulated battlefield.

American experts say they have not been able to verify whether the radioactive poles were used under Mr. Hussein for live tests on humans and animals that simulated battlefield conditions under nuclear attack, as reports from Iraqi exiles in the years before the American occupation suggested.

But documents recording tests on humans, including dust-covered strips of film showing the naked upper bodies and heads of men who appeared to have been alive when the films were made, were found by The New York Times at the site during two visits there in mid-November.

American officers who oversaw the complex operation to recover the two unshielded capsules of cobalt-60 have hinted that the failure to identify the looting in September until two weeks later may have resulted from a work overload among experts who gather data from spy satellites.

In a somber reflection of the hostility toward Americans in this area at the southern end of the so-called Sunni triangle, Colonel Krivo said, "If for any reason there are people in those villages who cannot or will not come forward to be tested, that would be very much to their detriment." He added, "The attitude out there is 'Why should we trust the Americans?'"

The two houses where the cobalt-60 capsules were found were identified after United States Army Black Hawk helicopters fitted with powerful radiation detectors flew wide patterns across the desert near the testing site, the officers said.

American experts say cobalt could be used in the making of "dirty bombs" — cheap, improvised nuclear devices. But American commanders here are convinced that the looters wanted the metal only for scrap.

American experts, and others from the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, which had the towers under surveillance for much of the 1990's and just before the American invasion of Iraq, say the cobalt capsules were strong enough when Mr. Hussein's scientists first used them in the early 1980's to emit potentially lethal gamma rays. Recent American tests have shown that the radioactivity of the capsules has decayed to about 10 percent of its original potency. But the fact that the capsules were unshielded, American experts say, still posed a danger to anyone exposed to them for a protracted period.

At both villages, local people have steadfastly refused to identify the men who dismantled the towers and moved them to the villages, along with the two capsules, or to tell American and Iraqi investigators where the men are now. The officers said they believed that after the lapses in spotting the looting, the American command — particularly a Pentagon unit called the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, working in Iraq to dispose of materials found at former chemical, biological and nuclear weapons sites — deserved credit for moving quickly into the villages and taking the capsules back to the testing site.

The testing site was then made safe by moving the capsules from all eight towers to an undisclosed but "safe" place. In a measure of how concerned the Americans were when they reached the two villages to recover the capsules, the officers described how an American soldier in Amiriya wearing no protective equipment had approached the capsule, mounted atop a 60-pound steel counterweight, had run with it, and had "heaved it over the fence, 100 feet from the house."

So far, about 70 villagers have been tested by teams from the Iraqi Ministry of Health and assisted by Americans, who took blood samples and conducted other tests.

Of those villagers, American officers say, four showed "abnormal results," and two, the 30-year-old man and the 4-year-old boy, were found to have symptoms consistent with radiation sickness. The man, who has the more serious of the two cases, had muscle pains, fatigue and multiple ulcerations in his mouth, the officers say, all classic symptoms of radiation sickness.

The officers did not identify the two victims or give their current state of health, but said they remained under observation.

In the case of the house in Amiriya, only women and children remain there, a situation almost unknown in the male-dominated life of Iraqi villages. American officers did not say in which village the two suspected radiation victims lived, or whether they believed that the 30-year-old man was among the looters.

The officers quoted the Iraqis living at the Amiriya house as saying that all the men in the family had been killed in the American invasion of Iraq, and that they knew nothing about how the radioactive capsule and the two 38-foot lengths of heavy steel lying just beyond a fence marking their yard had gotten there.

In Shamiya, the officers said, the family offered an even less credible explanation, given that American experts inspected all eight towers in May and found the capsules intact.

"They said, 'An Iraqi soldier came to the house in April and told us to bury the object here, and to stay away from it,'" the officers said.

The American investigation set in motion by General Sanchez appears to be a rigorous one. "He's investigating this in great detail, and he's personally engaged," Colonel Krivo said of the general. "We will get to the bottom of this." For years, Western human rights groups reported claims by Iraqi defectors that prisoners were being taken from Mr. Hussein's overcrowded prisons, including his main fortress at Abu Ghraib, about 30 miles north of the testing site, to be used as human guinea pigs.

But initial translations of the Arabic documents found at the site have not yet shown whether the tests recorded in the films involved biological, chemical or nuclear weapons, or who the men in the filmstrips were.

The looting of the capsules seems likely to become a parable for much of the nature of the American occupation of Iraq.

Some defense officials who discussed the incident on the basis of anonymity said events at the desert site showed the Bush administration's error in sending too few troops to Iraq, a decision that high-ranking American officers in Baghdad shortly after its capture said had curbed their powers to crack down on the looting that ransacked the city. So far, experts working for the Iraq Survey Group, mostly Americans and Britons with long knowledge of Iraq's secret weapons programs, have failed to discover, or at least to announce the discovery of, materials indicating that Mr. Hussein was developing illicit weapons in the final years of his rule.

The site looted was known to the West. In the Persian Gulf war in 1991, it was heavily bombed. Although the site carried several names, the most common of them, the Saddam State Company, left little doubt of the direct link to Mr. Hussein.

After the site came under close inspection by United Nations weapons inspectors who arrived in the wake of the 1991 war, it lost much of its importance as top-secret programs were transferred.

Now, it is a desolate, windswept wasteland, evocative of the billions of dollars Mr. Hussein spent on weapons programs at a time when Iraq was being steadily impoverished by the wars he started and by the United Nations economic sanctions that followed.

But the site's size, about 20 square miles, its history and its strategic positioning in an area that was Mr. Hussein's main political stronghold, made it an inevitable place for American experts to visit shortly after Baghdad fell on April 9.

In the first half of May, a member of a United States Army unit searching for secret weapons said the team had found the eight radioactive testing towers and the concrete crypts beneath them, and had discovered a large radiation source in each crypt.

As reported by The New York Times on May 12, the team recommended that the area be secured by American forces until the radiation sources could be removed.

But the unit's recommendation was evidently ignored. American officers fear that because the villagers may have been continuously exposed to the gamma radiation for as long as a month before they were taken away by American troops on Oct. 8, the risks of sickness among the missing villagers could be high.

Judith Miller contributed reporting for this article from New York.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/25/international/middleeast/25NUKE.html>

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Washington Post
November 25, 2003
Pg. 1

U.S., Allies Agree On Iran Move

Nuclear Steps Deplored; U.N. Could Get Involved

By Glenn Kessler and Robin Wright, Washington Post Staff Writers

The Bush administration reached agreement with key European allies yesterday on a resolution that "strongly deplores Iran's past failures and breaches" in disclosing its nuclear program and establishes a fast-track procedure to take the issue to the U.N. Security Council if any additional violations are discovered, senior administration officials said.

The deal breaks an impasse between the United States and France, Germany and Britain over how to balance support for Iran's recent willingness to reveal 18 years of clandestine nuclear activities with the threat of sanctions for what the United States describes as a nuclear weapons program. The Europeans, who had persuaded the Iranians to submit to stricter inspections, sought a milder resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency, a U.N. agency. But the United States pushed for immediate consideration by the Security Council.

Referring the issue to the Security Council would subject Iran to possible sanctions, which the Europeans feared would embolden hard-liners in Iran to end its nascent cooperation. But U.S. officials were insistent that Iran must not be lulled into thinking it had escaped possible penalties.

The agreement, for the moment, defuses a diplomatic hotspot while the administration struggles to steady Iraq and to restrain North Korea's nuclear ambitions. U.S. officials were particularly pleased about the agreement, saying it acknowledges the possibility that Iran has turned a new leaf while leaving little doubt that future transgressions would receive immediate action.

"We endorsed the efforts of the [European] three to get the Iranians to cooperate," a senior U.S. official said. "But there had to be something to make it clear the Iranians have pushed us too far here."

A French envoy, however, described the agreement as "very near to the European logic." The envoy said that the United States dropped its insistence that the Security Council consider the matter, and that the resolution is focused on Iran's "implementing the agreements it reached with us a few weeks ago."

The resolution urges Iran to "adhere strictly to its obligations" to the nuclear agency "in both the letter and spirit" of nuclear nonproliferation rules. The resolution also calls on Iran "to undertake and complete the taking of all necessary corrective measures on an urgent basis."

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell spoke repeatedly to his European counterparts by telephone over the weekend in an effort to find a solution. A meeting of the IAEA's governing board in Vienna had ended in acrimony Friday after the U.S. representative harshly criticized the agency for saying in a report that there was "no evidence" Iran had a nuclear weapons program.

Officials said they expected the resolution to be approved tomorrow without a vote, signifying a consensus among the 35-nation board. "The secretary invested a lot of time and political capital in getting this right," the official said. In a confidential report earlier this month, the IAEA concluded that Iran had repeatedly breached its nuclear safeguard agreements under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which it is a signatory. The report said Iran

manufactured small amounts of enriched uranium and plutonium as part of a secret 18-year nuclear program, and it harshly criticized Iran for hiding evidence of its nuclear program from international inspectors and for numerous "breaches" in its nuclear treaty obligations.

While the amount of plutonium produced was probably minuscule -- far less than needed for a nuclear weapon -- Iran previously denied conducting any such experiments. Plutonium production is generally associated only with nuclear weapons programs.

Iran has agreed to snap inspections and unfettered access to its nuclear facilities under an enhanced safeguards agreement called the "Additional Protocol." The Iranians also pledged to suspend uranium enrichment for an unspecified period.

But U.S. officials are highly skeptical that Iran has disclosed all of its activities or will completely cooperate, and they have pushed hard for a "trigger" if future violations are uncovered. Under the agreement, "any future serious Iranian violations" would spark an immediate meeting of the IAEA board to consider "all options at its disposal." One U.S. official said this meant that a vote to send the matter to the Security Council could be called without an additional investigation or reports by the IAEA, but merely on the disclosure of new information that Iran had failed to provide to the agency. He gave as an example any credible report from the Iranian opposition group, the National Council of Resistance of Iran, which in the past year has produced a stream of reports on Iran's nuclear program that have been confirmed by IAEA investigations.

Ironically, the Bush administration this summer shut down the group's Washington office on the grounds that it is part of a foreign terrorist organization.

One U.S. official said Iran's behavior during the discussions in Vienna helped swing the debate in the United States' favor. The Iranian delegate, he said, annoyed other nations when he indicated that Iran would not sign the additional protocol unless the IAEA resolution met Iran's approval. "It was eye-opening to a lot of fence-sitting nations," he said.

"We had to work three European friends from a text that was too loose, too forgiving, into a text that does the job by making clear that this is about correcting the past, not just about going into the future," said another U.S. official. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A11537-2003Nov24.html>

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Al-Qaida terrorists to gas U.S. subways?

Homeland Security memo warns of device that uses cyanide to asphyxiate its victims

By Paul Sperry

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WASHINGTON - Al-Qaida terrorists have developed a crude device designed to spread deadly cyanide gas through the ventilation systems of crowded indoor facilities such as subways, according to a closely held security directive issued to law enforcement by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and obtained exclusively by WorldNetDaily.

"Al-Qaida remains intent on using chemical or biological agents in attacks on the homeland," says the internal warning. "Terrorists have designed a crude chemical dispersal device fabricated from commonly available materials, which is designed to asphyxiate its victims."

Marked "For Official Use Only," the five-page memo issued Friday says the device produces cyanogen chloride gas and hydrogen cyanide gas, and can be placed near air intakes or ventilation systems in crowded open spaces or enclosed spaces.

"These gases are most effective when released in confined spaces such as subways, buildings or other crowded indoor facilities," adds the Homeland Security memo, which was distributed to federal agencies in anticipation of possible al-Qaida attacks around the end of the Muslim holiday Ramadan, which happens to coincide with Thanksgiving and the start of the regular holiday season.

Citing "recent information" from al-Qaida sources, the directive also warns of possible car-bombings in America, as first reported yesterday by WorldNetDaily, and advises security officials to take code-red protective measures to guard government buildings and gas and other chemical plants.

"Al-Qaida continues to plan attacks against U.S. targets," the memo asserts.

Despite the high-threat measures, the administration has decided to keep the public terror-threat alert at yellow, or elevated. Phone calls to Homeland Security were not returned.

Experts in chemical weapons say al-Qaida is known to have sought a weapon to pump cyanide gas into ventilation systems.

"Al-Qaida has shown an interest in cyanide as a weapon," said Amy Sands, former deputy director of nonproliferation studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies in California.

She cites Ahmed Ressam, the terrorist convicted of plotting to bomb Los Angeles International Airport during the millennium celebrations. He claims to have been trained to kill people with cyanide at an al-Qaida camp in Afghanistan.

"His terrorist masters also taught him how to introduce cyanide gas into public ventilation systems in order to affect the maximum number of victims, while minimizing the risk to the perpetrator," Sands said.

She also points to the nine al-Qaida-tied Moroccans arrested last year in Rome. They allegedly were planning to poison the water supply of the U.S. embassy with potassium ferrocyanide.

"Al-Qaida has shown a continued interest in targeting subways, rail systems, dams and water facilities" in America, the Homeland Security memo warns.

Noting the recent "sophisticated" car-bombings in Saudi Arabia and Turkey, it adds that the terror group may use "novel methods" to pull off such attacks in America, including disguising suicide bombers as women.

"Male bombers may dress as females in order to discourage scrutiny," the federal memo warns.

http://worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=35825

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Washington Times

November 26, 2003

Pg. 9

Powell 'Happy With' Nuke Compromise

U.S. seeks 'trigger' in resolution

By Nicholas Kravev, The Washington Times

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said yesterday he was "happy" with a U.S.-European compromise on Iran's nuclear programs even though it stopped short of referring Tehran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

Other U.S. officials said, however, that, given Iran's past attempts to conceal its nuclear ambitions, there is a good chance that it might get caught in noncompliance again soon.

This is why the United States insisted on a so-called "trigger" paragraph in the resolution, which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is expected to adopt today.

That paragraph — the main source of contention in the document's final drafts — says Iran's case will be sent automatically to the IAEA Board of Governors in the event of any future violations of its nonproliferation obligations.

Mr. Powell and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw — the principal European negotiator — labored over the "trigger" text in several phone calls over the weekend, a senior State Department official said.

"The resolution notes all that Iran has been doing over the years, with respect to its nuclear programs," Mr. Powell told reporters yesterday. "It notes that Iran has been in breach of obligations."

The United States gave up its demand that the IAEA declare Iran guilty of noncompliance with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) after it became clear that the Europeans would not drop their opposition.

A recent IAEA report found that Iran had been violating nuclear safeguards for the past 18 years, Europe argued that it would be counterproductive to antagonize Tehran at a time when it is offering unprecedented cooperation with the international agency.

The European nations on Oct. 21 secured an agreement with Iran that led to its filing a comprehensive report on its nuclear programs, pledging to allow wider inspections and suspending the enrichment of uranium.

The compromise reached between Mr. Powell and Mr. Straw "was the best deal we could get," a U.S. official said. "We had to give [the Europeans] some of the things they wanted."

A Western diplomat in Vienna, where the IAEA is based, said in an interview that, while the Bush administration maintained a tough public position against Iran, in private its negotiators "were becoming more practical."

"I'm very happy with the resolution," Mr. Powell said. "I'd like to thank my European Union colleagues who worked so hard on it, especially the EU three, as well as other members of the IAEA Board of Governors, that we've worked closely with."

The "EU three" — Britain, Germany and France — tabled the draft Monday. It is expected to be adopted without a formal vote today, the diplomat said.

The IAEA board began a series of meetings Thursday to consider its response to a report from the IAEA director-general, Mohamed ElBaradei, saying Tehran had violated nuclear safeguards for 18 years, including making small amounts of plutonium and enriched uranium.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20031125-093127-6338r.htm>

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Jerusalem Post
November 26, 2003

Iran Said Trying To Extend Reach Of Hizbullah's Rockets

By David Rudge

Iran is reportedly trying to extend the reach of its short and medium-range missiles, some of which could later be supplied to one of its main allies in the Middle East – Hizbullah.

Reports in the foreign and Hebrew press noted that Iran, under the auspices of Syria, had already armed Hizbullah with upgraded versions of Katyusha rockets that have ranges of 43 km – 75 km.

These versions, known as the Farj 3 and Farj 5, which were allegedly developed by Iranian weapons experts with the aid of North Korea, have been transported to Hizbullah in Lebanon via Syria, reportedly with the blessing of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Hizbullah is believed to have stockpiled thousands of rockets since the IDF's withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000, including many of the long-range versions that would be capable of reaching Haifa and the bayside suburbs, and as far south as Zichron Ya'acov.

The new extended range missiles reportedly being developed by Iran would, if supplied to Hizbullah, further expand its threat to Israel.

It was perhaps this threat to which the organization's chief Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah was referring during a speech to thousands of supporters at a "Jerusalem Day" rally in Beirut, held to coincide with the last Friday of Ramadan.

In the speech, Nasrallah warned that Hizbullah would strike deep into Israel in retaliation for any acts of aggression by the "Zionist enemy" against targets in Lebanon or Syria.

"It is true that the Israeli air force is powerful, but if they attack our people or our [Syrian] brothers, it is our legitimate right to strike not only the [northern border] regions but anywhere we can," said Nasrallah.

"The arm of the resistance is long and its counter attack will be beyond all expectations," the Hizbullah leader was quoted as saying.

Despite the fiery rhetoric and reports of Iran's missile development program, negotiations are continuing between Hizbullah and Israel, via German mediators, over a proposed prisoner swap.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's special envoy Maj.-Gen. (res.) Ilan Biran is reportedly in Germany to hear Hizbullah's response to the terms of a deal that was narrowly approved by the cabinet.

One of the main stumbling blocks revolves around Israel's refusal to release Lebanese Druse Samir Kuntar, who, as head of a Palestinian terror squad, was responsible for the deaths of a father, his two small daughters, and a policeman in Nahariya in 1979.

Hizbullah is reportedly insisting on the release of all Lebanese held by Israel, including Kuntar, in any proposed exchange deal.

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JParticle/ShowFull&cid=1069742949690>

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Philadelphia Inquirer
November 26, 2003

Britain, France Want U.N. Agency Of Arms Inspectors

By Dafna Linzer, Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS - Britain and France want to turn the U.N. inspection force that worked in Iraq before the war into a permanent agency authorized to investigate biological weapons and missile programs worldwide, the Associated Press has learned.

The United States opposes the idea, diplomats and U.N. officials said, putting Washington at odds with its wartime ally Britain and in the same camp as Pakistan and Syria - Security Council members whose suspect weapons programs have caused international concern.

For the Bush administration, support for the secret initiative could prove embarrassing after it criticized U.N. inspectors for failing to find the same illicit Iraqi weapons the U.S. search has not come up with yet.

But a formal rejection could also be awkward since the initiative is based on a recognition that one of Washington's biggest fears - that weapons of mass destruction could get into the wrong hands - is a prime concern for the United Nations as well.

For most of the council and the European Union, saving the agency known as UNMOVIC and sending it back to Iraq is an acknowledgment that inspections work.

Britain's position has always been to get the inspectors back into Iraq. Not so for the United States.

"The coalition has taken on the responsibility for inspections and the search" for weapons in Iraq, U.S. Ambassador John Negroponte has said. Noting that the Security Council is bound by a resolution to discuss UNMOVIC's future regarding Iraq, Negroponte said this summer: "We haven't ruled anything in or ruled anything out at this particular time."

American officials said the United States would not formally discuss UNMOVIC until after the U.S. weapons search in Iraq was complete. That could leave the U.N. agency in limbo until June, when David Kay, the CIA official who is leading the hunt, is expected to finish his work.

Members of UNMOVIC, the outgrowth of an inspections process created after the 1991 Persian Gulf War, are considered the only weapons experts specifically trained in biological weapons and missile disarmament. They also investigated Iraq's chemical-weapons programs, but international chemical inspections are done by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, based at the Hague, Netherlands.

Britain and France, with help from Russia, Canada and the European Union, are working on a way to turn UNMOVIC into an international inspection team for biological weapons and missiles, diplomats and U.N. officials said on condition of anonymity.

The plan would require a new Security Council resolution and Washington's support for approval. Diplomats said the matter was sensitive for the Bush administration now but they hope Washington will agree.

"We think the Iraq experience has helped Americans recognize the potential utility of having someone other than themselves do this kind of work," one senior Western diplomat said. "The costs are high, the work is hard, and even Congress has said the U.N. inspectors had some better intelligence than the CIA did."

The biggest challenge would be financing. UNMOVIC's operations were funded by Iraqi oil money. The agency had budgeted \$80 million for one year of inspections. The Bush administration asked Congress in October for \$600 million to cover as much as eight more months of weapons searches.

Details of the initiative were discussed during an Oct. 23 meeting of the U.N. disarmament committee and are loosely based on a June declaration by the European Union on weapons of mass destruction.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/news/nation/7350919.htm>

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Los Angeles Times

November 26, 2003

Jury Still Deliberating In Plague Expert Trial

By Times Wire Reports

A jury deliberated for a day without reaching a verdict on whether an expert on bubonic plague made false statements to the FBI and whether he illegally trafficked in the dread disease's bacteria.

Deliberations will resume Monday. If convicted, Texas Tech University professor Thomas Butler could face life in prison.

Prosecutors alleged that Butler created a hoax when he reported in January that 30 vials containing plague were missing.

The defense says Butler, charged on a series of regulatory crimes, could be found guilty only if he acted in bad faith.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-briefs26.3nov26,1,2029563.story>

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