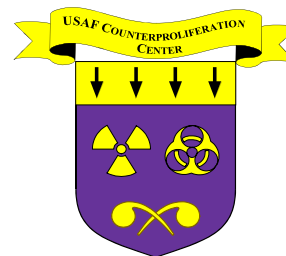


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Fears Prompt U.S. to Beef Up Nuclear Terror Detection

Sensors Deployed Near D.C., Borders; Delta Force on Standby

By Barton Gellman

Washington Post Staff Writer

Sunday, March 3, 2002; Page A01

Alarmed by growing hints of al Qaeda's progress toward obtaining a nuclear or radiological weapon, the Bush administration has deployed hundreds of sophisticated sensors since November to U.S. borders, overseas facilities and choke points around Washington. It has placed the Delta Force, the nation's elite commando unit, on a new standby alert to seize control of nuclear materials that the sensors may detect.

Ordinary Geiger counters, worn on belt clips and resembling pagers, have been in use by the U.S. Customs Service for years. The newer devices are called gamma ray and neutron flux detectors. Until now they were carried only by mobile Nuclear Emergency Search Teams (NEST) dispatched when extortionists claimed to have radioactive materials. Because terrorists would give no such warning, and because NEST scientists are unequipped for combat, the Delta Force has been assigned the mission of killing or disabling anyone with a suspected nuclear device and turning it over to the scientists to be disarmed.

The new radiation sensors are emplaced in layers around some fixed points and temporarily at designated "national security special events" such as last month's Olympic Games in Utah. Allied countries, including Saudi Arabia, have also rushed new detectors to their borders after American intelligence warnings. To address the technological limits of even the best current sensors, the Bush administration has ordered a crash program to build next-generation devices at the three national nuclear laboratories.

These steps join several other signs, described in recent interviews with U.S. government policymakers, that the Bush administration's nuclear anxieties have intensified since American-backed forces routed Osama bin Laden's network and its Taliban backers in Afghanistan.

"Clearly . . . the sense of urgency has gone up," said a senior government policymaker on nuclear, biological and chemical terror. Another high-ranking official said, "The more you gather information, the more our concerns increased about al Qaeda's focus on weapons of mass destruction of all kinds."

In "tabletop exercises" conducted as high as Cabinet level, President Bush's national security team has highlighted difficult choices the chief executive would face if the new sensors picked up a radiation signature on a boat steaming up the Potomac River or a truck heading for the capital on Interstate 95.

Participants in those exercises said the gaps in their knowledge are considerable. But the intelligence community, they said, believes that al Qaeda could already control a stolen Soviet-era tactical nuclear warhead or enough weapons-grade material to fashion a functioning, if less efficient, atomic bomb.

Even before more recent discoveries, some analysts regarded that prospect as substantial. Some expressed that view when the intelligence community devoted a full-day retreat to the subject early last year in Chantilly, Va., according to someone with firsthand knowledge.

A majority of those present assessed the likelihood as negligible, but none of the more than 50 participants ruled it out.

The consensus government view is now that al Qaeda probably has acquired the lower-level radionuclides strontium 90 and cesium 137, many thefts of which have been documented in recent years. These materials cannot produce a nuclear detonation, but they are radioactive contaminants. Conventional explosives could scatter them in what is known as a radiological dispersion device, colloquially called a "dirty bomb."

The number of deaths that might result is hard to predict but probably would be modest. One senior government specialist said "its impact as a weapon of psychological terror" would be far greater.

These heightened U.S. government fears explain Bush's activation, the first since the dawn of the nuclear age, of contingency plans to maintain a cadre of senior federal managers in underground bunkers away from Washington. The Washington Post described the features of the classified "Continuity of Operations Plan" on Friday.

Bush's emphasis on nuclear terrorism dates from a briefing in the Situation Room during the last week of October. According to knowledgeable sources, Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet walked the president through an accumulation of fresh evidence about al Qaeda's nuclear ambition. Described by one consumer of intelligence as "an incomplete mosaic" of fact, inference and potentially false leads, Tenet's briefing raised fears that "sent the president through the roof." With considerable emotion, two officials said, Bush ordered his national security team to give nuclear terrorism priority over every other threat to the United States.

Tenet told Bush that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was more deeply compromised than either government has acknowledged publicly. Pakistan arrested two former nuclear scientists, Sultan Bashiruddin Mahmood and Abdul Majid, on Oct. 23, and interrogated them about contacts with bin Laden and his lieutenants.

Pakistani officials maintain that the scientists did not pass important secrets to al Qaeda, but they have not disclosed that Mahmood failed multiple polygraph examinations about his activities.

Most disturbing to U.S. intelligence was another leak from Pakistan's program that has not been mentioned in public. According to American sources, a third Pakistani nuclear scientist tried to negotiate the sale of an atomic weapon design to Libya. The Post was unable to learn which Pakistani blueprint was involved, whether the transaction was completed, or what became of the scientist after discovery. Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is believed to include bombs of relatively simple design, built around cores of highly enriched uranium, and more sophisticated weapons employing Chinese implosion technology to compress plutonium to a critical mass.

At the October briefing, Bush learned of a remark by a senior member of al Qaeda's operational command. The operative had been an accurate, though imprecise, harbinger of al Qaeda plans in the past.

After U.S. bombing began in Afghanistan, an American official said, the same man was reliably reported to have said “there will be another attack and it’s going to be much bigger” than the one that toppled the World Trade Center and destroyed a wing of the Pentagon on Sept. 11.

“What the hell did that mean?” the official said, recalling the stunned reaction of those briefed on the remark. Other reports reaching Washington described al Qaeda references to obtaining, or having obtained, special weapons. “The benign explanation is bucking up the troops” with false bravado, the official said, but the Bush administration took the report “extremely seriously.”

Searches of al Qaeda sites in Afghanistan, undertaken since American-backed forces took control there, are not known to have turned up a significant cache of nuclear materials.

The New York Times reported that U.S. personnel in Afghanistan sent three suspected samples to American labs for analysis but found no significant radioactive source.

There is evidence that some of al Qaeda’s nuclear efforts over the years met with swindles and false leads. In one case, officials said, the organization was taken in by scam artists selling “red mercury,” a phony substance they described as a precursor, or ingredient, of weapons-grade materials.

If al Qaeda has a weapon or its components, U.S. officials said, its whereabouts would be the organization’s most closely guarded secret. Addressing the failure of American searchers to find such materials in abandoned Afghan camps, one policymaker noted that “we haven’t found most of the al Qaeda leadership either, and we know that exists.”

The likeliest source of nuclear materials, or of a warhead bought whole, is the vast complex of weapons labs and storage sites that began to crumble with the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. Russia has decommissioned some 10,000 tactical nuclear weapons since then, but it has been able to document only a fraction of the inventory. The National Intelligence Council, an umbrella organization for the U.S. analytical community, reported to Congress last month that there are at least four occasions between 1992 and 1999 when “weapons-grade and weapons-usable nuclear materials have been stolen from some Russian institutes.”

Of those thefts, the report said, “We assess that undetected smuggling has occurred, although we do not know the extent or magnitude.”

Victor Yerastov, chief of nuclear accounting and control for Russia’s ministry of atomic energy, has said that in 1998 a theft in Chelyabinsk Oblast made off with “quite sufficient material to produce an atomic bomb.”

An American official, commenting on that theft, said that “given the known and suspected capabilities of the Russian mafia, it’s perfectly plausible that al Qaeda would have access to such materials.” The official added, “They could get it from anybody they could bribe.”

Col. Gen. Igor Valynkin, chief of the Russian organization responsible for safeguarding nuclear weapons, said on Oct. 27 that any claim Russia has lost an intact warhead is “barking mad.”

The U.S. government is not accepting that assurance at face value. “We don’t know with any confidence what has gone missing, and neither do they,” said one American official.

Thefts of less threatening nuclear byproducts, especially isotopes of strontium, cesium and partially enriched uranium, have been reported more frequently. In November 1995, Chechen rebels placed a functioning “dirty bomb” using dynamite and cesium 137 in Moscow’s Izmailovo park. They did not detonate it. Al Qaeda is closely aligned with the Chechens.

There are limits, “governed by the laws of physics,” as one official put it, to American technology for detecting these materials. In broad terms they have to do with sensing radioactivity at a distance and through shielding, and with the balance between false positives and false negatives. There are classified Energy Department documents that catalogue what one of them called “shortcomings in the ability of NEST equipment to locate the target materials which if known by adversaries could be used to defeat the search equipment and/or procedures.” The Post has agreed to publish no further details.

A division of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, known as NIS-6, is leading efforts to build an improved generation of sensors. Some will use neutron generators to “interrogate” a suspected object, and others are planned for long-range detection of alpha particles.

A measure of the government’s grave concern is the time devoted by top national security officials to developing options for a crisis involving nuclear terrorism.

One hypothetical scenario, participants said, began with a sensor detecting what appeared to be the radiation signature of a nuclear weapon amid a large volume of traffic on a highway such as I-95.

According to two participants, the group considered how the Energy Department’s NEST teams, working with Delta Force, might find and take control of the weapon without giving a terrorist time to use it.

Roadblocks and car-by-car searches, for example, would create chaos, require hours, and give ample warning to those hiding the device. But without roadblocks the searchers might fail to isolate the weapon within a radius

defined by the limits of sensor technology. If commandos found the device, they could expect to encounter resistance. Would the president delegate to on-scene commanders a decision that might result in nuclear detonation? Which officials, meanwhile, should be evacuated? Would government inform the public of the threat, a step that would wreak panic without precedent in any country and complicate the job of finding the weapon? "Evacuation is one of those issues you throw your hands up and say, 'It's too hard,'" said one participant in a tabletop exercise. "Nobody wants to make that decision, certainly not in advance."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A29406-2002Mar2.html>

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Scientist: Diluted smallpox vaccines effective

March 3, 2002 Posted: 11:42 PM EST (0442 GMT)

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- A nearly completed study indicates that diluted forms of smallpox vaccine are effective, meaning the current national vaccine supply of 15 million doses can be diluted to 150 million doses, a leading government scientist said Sunday.

"I can say with some certainty that it's been a successful experiment," Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, told CNN.

"If you look at the data in the aggregate, it's what we had hoped," said Fauci, citing a study that has been completed but not yet presented publicly or published.

In 1980, after an extensive vaccination program, the World Health Assembly (the annual meeting of World Health Organization members) declared smallpox eradicated from the world and recommended ceasing all vaccinations, including those of children.

The disease came under the microscope again after September 11 amid concerns that terrorists could kill millions by unleashing smallpox or other deadly viruses on the public.

In testimony to a Senate panel last year, Fauci said a smallpox attack is just one of many potential bioterrorism threats but "perhaps the most frightening."

The virus is easily transmitted through aerosolized droplets of saliva and other bodily fluids. It kills at least 30 percent of its victims and disfigures many who survive.

Last fall, health officials began looking into producing a new vaccine. The government ordered 155 million doses from Acambis Inc., working with Baxter International, with production scheduled to be finished by late fall 2002.

But health officials also wanted to see whether the existing vaccine, made more than 20 years ago by Wyeth-Ayerst Laboratories, could be improved.

Scientists conducted two studies to determine whether diluted vaccines would elicit enough of an immune response to provide protection. In the first experiment, the old vaccine was diluted five times; in the second, the vaccine was diluted 10 times.

With the tests nearly complete, Fauci said, "Both dilutions are looking good."

With smallpox effectively eradicated by the late 1970s, health officials have not replenished vaccine supplies in more than two decades. The virus is known to exist only under lock and key in government centers in Atlanta, Georgia, and Moscow, Russia.

It has not been determined if or when the general U.S. population would get the smallpox vaccine, or whether people would receive a dose of the new vaccine or a diluted version of the old one.

The old vaccine was developed by scraping material from infected cows. The new vaccine will be made from a tissue cell culture, which is now commonly used in making other vaccines such as tetanus.

The old vaccine carried serious risks, including death. Studies have suggested if routine vaccinations continued during the 20 years since global eradication, 200 American children would have died from complications.

<http://www.cnn.com/2002/HEALTH/03/03/gen.smallpox.vaccine/index.html>

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U.S., German Troops Stage War Games in Kuwait

Mon Mar 4, 3:29 PM ET

By Roland Rahal

NEAR CAMP DOHA, Kuwait (Reuters) - U.S. and German troops wearing gas masks staged exercises in nuclear, biological and chemical warfare in the Kuwaiti desert Monday amid speculation about a possible U.S. attack on Iraq.

In Germany's first military exercises in the Gulf, German-made Fuchs military vehicles equipped to detect chemicals swept an abandoned women's prison, a relic from the Gulf War ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) near Camp Doha, used by U.S. forces to store hardware.

"We are training with American soldiers in case of attacks by terrorists. We have the opportunity to help states that invite us to help. Our aim is to reduce the suffering of people in case of attacks," said German Lieutenant Colonel Andreas Bednarzyk.

During the two-hour exercise, soldiers identified and removed the mock weapon and cleaned the personnel and equipment exposed to contamination.

"I am enjoying it and it is pretty fun. We have done a lot of training with the Germans," U.S. Specialist Hughes Keva from Florida, wearing a protection suit and mask, told Reuters.

Kuwaiti troops did not take part in the exercises but Kuwaiti officers were present as observers.

"It is really hard, I can stand the suit for a short period of time but it is good to have a similar experience," a German soldier from Berlin said.

The United States has kept about 8,000 troops in Kuwait since a U.S.-led alliance drove Iraqi forces out of the Gulf Arab state in the 1991 Gulf War.

Some are training in desert areas close to the Iraqi border.

President Bush ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) has labeled Iraq as part of an "axis of evil," raising the prospect of a U.S. attack against Iraq in the next phase of Washington's war on terrorism.

Sixty of the 250-strong German anti-chemical warfare unit, in Kuwait since three weeks ago, took part in Monday's exercise.

"Two hundred soldiers will leave in mid-March and the rest will stay until the end of June for the maintenance of trucks and are being prepared if something happens," said German Captain Hans-Christian Krohze. He declined to elaborate.

Czech forces are to take part in a similar exercise in Kuwait later this month, a U.S. military official said.

The Czech Republic, a NATO ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) member since 1999, is reported to be sending about 300 soldiers to Kuwait to help in the U.S.-led anti-terror campaign. Washington had asked Prague to provide troops to detect and defend against chemical weapons.

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/nm/20020304/ts_nm/attack_usa_wargames_dc_1

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New York Times

March 6, 2002

Iraqis Will Face Blunt Terms In Weapons Talks At The U.N.

By Barbara Crossette

UNITED NATIONS, March 5 — After three years of refusing to deal with United Nations arms inspectors, a high-level Iraqi delegation is about to come face to face for the first time with the leader of the inspection commission, Hans Blix.

That the Iraqis have agreed to this meeting, set for Thursday, after asking to see only Secretary General Kofi Annan, is indicative of the concern they have that the threat of an American attack is real, if not imminent, diplomats and United Nations officials said in interviews this week.

While no one expects a quick resumption of arms inspections in Iraq, diplomats said the Iraqis appear more conciliatory. They also said the five permanent Security Council members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the

United States — are more unified than in recent years at least on the demand that until inspectors return on the Council's terms, no relief from sanctions can be permitted.

Dr. Blix, a Swedish disarmament expert and international lawyer, said in an interview on Monday that the Council's terms meant unrestricted access and no Iraqi veto over the nationality of inspectors. "I am not giving any discounts on Security Council resolutions," he said. "There are no sanctuaries. The resolutions make it quite clear that there should be access that is unconditional, immediate and unrestricted."

The Iraqis sought this week's meeting after a year of cold-shouldering the United Nations and another two years of playing Council members off one another. When Mr. Annan agreed to the talks, he decided to include Dr. Blix, executive chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, created in December 1999 to replace an earlier body, the United Nations Special Commission. A senior United Nations legal counsel will also be present.

The Iraqi delegation to what is expected to be only the first round of talks will be led by a new foreign minister, Naji Sabri, who is considered more amenable than his blustering predecessor, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf.

Weapons experts will be included in the Iraqi group, the first to venture out on this issue since a reshuffle in the Iraqi foreign affairs hierarchy that may have reduced the influence of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, diplomats said. Mr. Aziz recently visited Moscow and Beijing but received little in the way of support from the Russians or Chinese for continued defiance of the Security Council.

At the International Peace Academy, a research organization in New York that works closely with the United Nations, David Malone, the organization's president, said American threats to hit Iraq may have influenced thinking in countries like Russia and France, which have large commercial interests there. If the government of Iraq were to be dislodged or toppled by United States action, what would happen to those interests — to the debt of up to \$8 billion Iraq owes the Russians?

"Saddam Hussein may have played his cards wrong," Mr. Malone, a Canadian diplomat, said in an interview.

"Overall, patience with Iraq has pretty much run out."

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Britain's ambassador to the United Nations, said today that Iraq's team looked promising.

"The fact that they are coming with a senior and quite serious delegation is a good sign that they want to have discussions with the secretary general about — as they would see it — the options open to them," he said. "As the Security Council, and I'm sure the secretary general, see it, the options open to them are compliance."

Britain and other Security Council members have met with Mr. Annan to encourage him not to allow the Iraqis to shift talks away from their immediate obligations. Iraq, seeking control over revenue from oil sales, wants a timetable for the lifting of penalties. Money now goes into escrow accounts, with some earmarked to assist the Kurds in northern Iraq, to pay reparations for the 1990 occupation of Kuwait and to support arms inspection.

Dr. Blix has used some of that money to turn the commission he has headed since early 2000 into a much more technically professional body than its predecessor. A vast data base with sophisticated search engines for cross-referencing archival material on Iraq has been created, he said.

Satellite imagery of Iraqi buildings, roads, power lines or other objects of interest to inspectors has been purchased from commercial suppliers. A blowup of the streets of Baghdad hangs on his office wall.

About 230 inspectors from dozens of countries have been trained or are now in training to work in Iraq, Dr. Blix said.

The Monterey Institute of International Studies in California has produced a media file of 3,000 to 4,000 articles or other material published on Iraqi weapons, including testimony from defectors and intelligence leaks. Technology has been upgraded. "They have acquainted themselves with a lot of new techniques," Dr. Blix said of his inspectors. "Sensors, tagging, cameras, etc. — all this moves very fast."

The question hanging over the United Nations now is whether the United States really wants arms inspectors to return, based on public comments made by Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld questioning their value. Some diplomats say the United States would not want inspectors on the ground if a military attack were being planned; the last inspectors to work in Iraq had to be pulled out ahead of American bombing in 1998.

Other diplomats say they think that Washington fears that inspectors could be used to give the appearance of Iraqi compliance while continuing to stonewall inspectors and hide weapons programs. Publicly, however, Bush administration officials call for the return of inspectors in line with Security Council demands.

As the Council approaches several critical months of work on the Iraq issue, European diplomats see the most unity on an agreement on a new list of what Iraq can buy freely with its oil money and of which items will be open to scrutiny because they look like civilian goods but could have military uses. That agreement is expected to be completed by mid- May.

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Chem-Bio Attack Looming, Say U.S. Officials

According to Sen. Tim Hutchinson, 'The unthinkable has become thinkable'

By Harold Kennedy

"Gas! Gas! Gas!" The warning crackled over military radios as clouds of thick, white smoke covered the cold, gray battlefield. One U.S. soldier was overcome and quickly fell unconscious. Others successfully donned their protective gear and charged the enemy, with their M-16s blazing. Within minutes, a medivac helicopter—a Black Hawk emblazoned with bright red crosses—swooped down to whisk away the casualty.

The event wasn't real. It was a tactical demonstration at the Army's Pine Bluff Arsenal, the second largest domestic storage site for the nation's chemical stockpile. It was conducted for visitors attending the Chemical Biological Defense Industrial Base Symposium, in nearby Little Rock, Ark., sponsored by the National Defense Industrial Association.

The demonstration took on added significance in the midst of the U.S.-led war on terrorism. The war is placing unprecedented emphasis upon the nation's chemical and biological defenses, top military and industrial leaders said during the symposium.

After last fall's terrorist attacks, "the chem-bio threat was no longer something that was just talked about," said Army Maj. Gen. John C. Doesburg, commander of the Soldier Biological and Chemical Command (SBCCOM), which includes Pine Bluff. "It was real, and it was killing people."

Shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, anthrax-contaminated letters, delivered through the U.S. mail system, killed five civilians in four states and the District of Columbia. Another 17 were infected by anthrax, but recovered after being treated with antibiotics, such as ciprofloxacin, which is trademarked as Cipro. In all, more than 5,100 people may have been exposed to anthrax, without becoming infected.

Just who mailed the letters remained a mystery, although evidence pointed toward an as-yet unidentified, disgruntled American scientist, investigators said.

The possibility of chem-bio attacks against the United States, however, is stronger than ever, warned Sen. Tim Hutchinson, R-Ark., ranking minority member of the armed services personnel subcommittee. "Since anthrax was discovered in our mail system, the unthinkable has become thinkable," he said. "Osama bin Laden has said that it is his religious duty to acquire chemical and biological capability."

In fact, U.S. forces in Afghanistan, searching deserted al Qaeda facilities, have uncovered evidence of bin Laden's efforts to develop such weapons. "We have found a number of things that show an appetite for weapons of mass destruction—diagrams, materials, reports that things were asked for, things were discussed at meetings, that type of thing," Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld told reporters.

It's not just bin Laden who has U.S. officials worried. Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein is known to have developed both chemical and biological weapons, including anthrax. In fact, he used chemical weapons against neighboring Iran in the 1980s and against his own people in the 1990s.

In all, at least 25 nations already have or are in the process of developing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and the means to deliver them.

"In the world of today, we need to be able to protect not only our forward-deployed military personnel, facilities and equipment overseas, but also our loved ones and homes here in the United States," Doesburg said. "We're no longer talking about a distant battlefield. We're talking about a son or a daughter, a wife or a husband."

A Lot of Focus

Thankfully, he said, the United States has placed "a lot of dollars and a lot of focus" on chemical and biological warfare in the past decade. Operation Desert Storm, against Iraq in 1991, revealed critical deficiencies in U.S. abilities to defend itself against those kinds of attacks. To correct those deficiencies, a number of steps have been taken, officials noted.

In 1994, Congress ordered the Defense Department to establish a Joint Chemical and Biological Defense Program to coordinate the services' chem-bio efforts, some of which date back to World War I. After the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the department was asked to take charge of chem-bio domestic preparedness.

As part of this effort, SBCCOM is training 120 cities, coast-to-coast, to respond to chemical and biological attacks. It has established a Chemical and Biological Rapid Response Team to act quickly and effectively to national and

international terrorist events. In such incidents, this team provides expertise in protecting first responders, detecting chemical and biological agents, decontaminating casualties and establishing command and control systems. To provide a means for the CB/RRT to have a communications network that is portable and, if necessary, independent of the existing commercial communications infrastructure, SBCCOM developed a Deployed Communications System. The heart of the DCS is a Digital Radio System that can link at least 100 mobile users and is fully compatible with Defense Department and commercial communications venues.

Another SBCCOM team, the Technical Escort Unit, specializes in the daily transportation and handling of chemical and biological agents. This battalion-size unit—headquartered at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., with companies at Pine Bluff, Utah's Dugway Proving Ground and Virginia's Fort Belvoir—responds to chem-bio emergencies anywhere in the world.

The technical escorts, however, are stretched thin, Doesburg said. "There are only about 300 of them," he said, "and I can't keep track of them. At any one time, they are about 98 percent deployed."

Separately, the Marine Corps has established a Chemical Biological Incident Response Force, now based at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Indian Head, Md. It also is designed respond rapidly to chemical, biological or nuclear attack.

To provide additional assistance, Congress has authorized the creation of 32 Army National Guard units—known as Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams—to assist state and local authorities in responding to domestic WMD incidents. In January, teams from 11 states were certified as fully ready to respond, if needed.

A Long Way to Go

All 32 teams are scheduled to be certified by fiscal year 2003. Each unit will consist of 22 highly skilled, full-time National Guard members, equipped and trained by the federal government.

Despite all of these steps, the United States has a long way to go to develop adequate chem-bio defenses, Hutchinson warned. "At least half of all U.S. communities have taken no steps to protect themselves," he said. The senator said that he was shocked to see that the only thing separating the anthrax-tainted Hart Senate Office Building and its neighbor on Capitol Hill—the Dirksen Building—was a piece of plywood.

Anthrax is a lethal, infectious, bacterial disease caused by contact with infected animals and products, including meat, or breathing weapon-dispersed spores, officials said. It leaves no indication of exposure—no cloud, color, smell or taste. It can be treated with antibiotics, if administered immediately after exposure. By the time symptoms occur, however, it is 99 percent lethal to unprotected individuals.

There is an anthrax vaccine, known as Anthrax Vaccine Adsorbed, or AVA. The sole manufacturer and distributor is BioPort Corporation, of Lansing, Mich. The vaccine is a sterile product made from what is left over after the filtration of a culture of anthrax bacteria. Because it is sterile, officials said, AVA cannot cause the disease itself. For the vaccine to be effective, however, six shots must be administered over an 18-month period, with boosters every year.

Also, AVA is in short supply. During the Clinton administration, the Defense Department ordered that all 2.4 million members of the armed services, including reserves and emergency-essential civilian employees, receive vaccinations against anthrax. Between March 1998 and December 2001, officials said, more than 2.1 million doses were administered to more than 525,000 service members, including the defense secretary and the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. But some military personnel, fearing adverse reactions, refused the vaccinations.

Then, in June 2001, the department ordered a slowdown in the immunization program, citing delays in the vaccine's availability. Henceforth, only designated special-mission units, manufacturing and defense research personnel, including those engaged in congressionally mandated anthrax vaccine research, were to receive vaccinations, said Army Secretary Thomas E. White.

Distribution of the vaccine paused in 1998, when the state of Michigan sold the nation's only production facility to BioPort, and the new owners began renovating the plant. Production resumed in 1999, but distribution remained on hold, pending approval of the renovations by the Federal Food and Drug Administration. Repeated FDA inspections, however, cited evidence of contamination, poor record keeping and unapproved procedures at the factory.

In December, the FDA again inspected the BioPort plant and issued seven "inspectional observations" that still needed attention, according to an FDA spokesman. "BioPort satisfactorily addressed many of these observations during the inspection," said the spokesman.

Finally, on January 31, the FDA took the last step to allow BioPort to resume distribution. It approved the facility that puts the vaccine into vials, Hollister-Stier Laboratories, of Spokane, Wash.

Hutchinson, however, said it has been a mistake to wait on BioPort. "By any objective measure," he told the symposium, "our military's reliance on BioPort as the sole-source producer of anthrax vaccine has been a failure. Today, as we send our troops into combat, many of them are unprotected against anthrax and other pathogens."

As an alternative, Hutchinson favors construction of a military vaccine-production facility at Pine Bluff.

"It would cost [the Defense Department] \$386 million to design, build and validate this important facility," he said. "Considering that we have already spent over \$120 million on BioPort and not received the anthrax that we've paid for, this amount seems eminently reasonable. \$120 million and no vaccine for our soldiers is unacceptable."

BioPort's Kramer sought to reassure a Senate hearing that his facility "is the most cost-effective" way to insure availability of vaccines for civilians or military personnel.

"Contrary to news reports, BioPort has maintained and significantly added to a stockpile of anthrax vaccine since acquiring the facilities in Lansing, Mich.," Kramer testified. "Although we cannot discuss the specific numbers contained in that stockpile, there is now a considerable amount of anthrax vaccine that could be made immediately available in an emergency."

In addition, officials said that the Federal Centers for Disease Control, in Atlanta, currently has enough antibiotics to prevent the disease in 2 million persons exposed to anthrax.

Hutchinson, however, said that much more needs to be done. "We need to make a national commitment to enhancing our chemical and biological defense industrial base," he said. "The threat is increasing every year, every month, every day."

Over the next 10 years, the chem-bio threat "will certainly increase," according to a Defense Department's 2001 report to Congress. "This will result from the development of chemical and biological agents that are more difficult to detect and from the adoption of more capable delivery systems," the report said. "Any nation with the political will and a minimal industrial base could produce chemical and biological weapon agents suitable for use in warfare."

To meet this threat, Congress already has allocated \$2.9 billion specifically to fight bioterrorism. Much of that will go to stockpile antibiotics, officials said.

In 2003, Bush is proposing to spend \$3.5 billion more to enhance the capabilities of first responders. "That is a thousand percent increase over what our government has spent [in the past]," he told a gathering of mayors and county officials. "It's necessary money."

The increase would pay for a wide range of equipment, including protective clothing, chemical and biological detection systems and interoperable communications gear, White House officials explained. It would also fund training programs to teach firefighters, police officers and emergency medical technicians how to respond and operate in a chemical or biological environment.

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USA Today
March 7, 2002
Pg. 1

Anthrax Vaccine Found Safe For Troops

By Anita Manning, USA Today

The anthrax vaccine is effective and safe enough to use to protect U.S. soldiers, says a panel of medical experts. But there are not enough studies to assure its safety for wide use by the public, and a better vaccine is needed, according to a report released Wednesday by the Institute of Medicine.

"The issue takes on particular urgency since the recent use of anthrax spores in the mail system," says Brian Strom of the University of Pennsylvania, who chaired the institute committee that investigated the anthrax vaccine.

The vaccine has been given to about 2 million people, mostly U.S. military personnel. In the USA, only one manufacturer, BioPort Corp. of Lansing, Mich., is licensed to produce it.

Some service men and women have reported disabling and chronic illnesses — including joint pain, vision and skin problems, and chronic fatigue — that occurred after they received anthrax shots. Fears of vaccine reactions have led more than 400 to refuse the shots, often ending their military careers.

But the panel, which advises the government on scientific issues, found no evidence that the vaccine was responsible for those ills, saying it is as likely to cause side effects as any other shot given to adults. Unlike other vaccines, anthrax shots are given six times over 18 months, followed by annual boosters.

"The anthrax vaccine, like any other drug, has risks associated with it," Strom says. Because the disease is not passed from person to person, and the number of people at risk is limited, "there is no reason for broad use of it," he says.

"Its side effects, coupled with the long series of doses required, are among the realities that underscore the need for a new and improved alternative," Strom says.

The Department of Defense sponsored the study, and Strom points out that the panel was not asked to review military policy or recommend whether the public should be vaccinated. That said, "it is effective, it is safe enough to use in populations at high risk."

Most of the information on the vaccine pertains to preventing anthrax before exposure to the bacteria's spores. Strom says the information on its effectiveness after exposure is limited, but he would advise its use, along with antibiotics, by anyone exposed to the microbe.

After postal workers, Capitol Hill employees and others were potentially exposed to anthrax sent through the mail last fall, those at high risk for exposure were given antibiotics and were offered anthrax vaccine. Most postal workers refused, citing safety concerns, but the report says that as of Feb. 25, 192 people had begun receiving the vaccine.

The report states that more data are needed on long-term health problems.

Physician Meryl Nass of Freeport, Maine, who is a critic of the DOD's anthrax vaccine program, says research unconnected to DOD is needed.

Until that happens, she says, "the public will not receive valid scientific data."

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New York Times

March 7, 2002

Pg. 1

Some See Panic As Main Effect Of Dirty Bombs

By James Glanz with Andrew C. Revkin

WASHINGTON, March 6 — Radioactive materials in wide use in the United States could be turned into weapons of terror that would probably kill few people but would spread panic and produce severe economic damage, scientists told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee today.

The materials would not produce nuclear explosions. Rather, they would be spread using conventional explosives in so-called dirty bombs. The scientists who testified at the committee's hearing today said such weapons were a potentially serious problem.

The most dangerous materials, they said, are bars of radioactive cobalt used to irradiate food, medical devices and other products to sterilize them. If turned into fine particles and dispersed under the right weather conditions, the cobalt could spread enough radiation to force the abandonment of an area the size of Manhattan, the scientists said. But federal and industry officials said such an action with radioactive cobalt was unlikely because of the intense radiation to which the person trying to use the weapon would be exposed and because the material is transported in secret and kept behind tons of lead and other shielding while on the road or in use.

Other radioactive materials in tens of thousands of medical and industrial devices could be used to make weapons that would leave wide areas with radiation levels above Environmental Protection Agency limits, possibly leading to temporary evacuation and an extremely difficult cleanup.

"Radiological terrorism is a very plausible threat," said Dr. Steven E. Koonin, a physicist and national security expert who is provost of the California Institute of Technology.

The necessary radioactive materials are relatively common, he said, and "the expertise for handling is widely known and readily acquired."

Scientists at the hearing held to understand these threats and to devise ways of protecting Americans against them also said that they remained concerned that fissionable material — the fuel for nuclear weapons — and the expertise needed to use it could be spreading from the former Soviet Union to terrorist networks, but presented no new evidence of such leakage.

Much of the testimony focused on commonplace industrial materials like radioactive cesium, widely used in devices that check the quality of welds, test the integrity of oil pipelines and even measure the thickness of asphalt on roadways. Medical probes and other devices also rely on materials of this kind.

Dr. Richard A. Meserve, chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, said that all such materials, as well as the much more powerful cobalt rods used in sterilizing food, are tightly controlled. He said that the weaker sources, if dispersed, would cause almost immeasurably small increases in cancer rates among people who were exposed.

Ideally, he said, evacuations from contaminated areas could be orderly. "It would not be such a crisis that if it took people 20 minutes or an hour to get out, it would be a disaster," Dr. Meserve said.

Nevertheless, that sort of attack could cause long-term problems because techniques for dealing with radioactive contamination rely largely on demolition and removal, Dr. Henry Kelly, president of the Federation of American Scientists, said. Because limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency for radiation exposure are so low, areas might have to be evacuated for the long term even when the health risks are relatively slight, he said.

Dr. Kelly offered a case study of what might happen if a dirty bomb containing a cobalt food irradiation bar exploded at the southern tip of Manhattan on a day with a light wind blowing toward the northeast. He calculated that Manhattan as far north as Central Park would be contaminated at levels similar to those in the permanently closed zone around the Chernobyl power plant. Manhattan would have to be abandoned for decades, Dr. Kelly said. The scientists said that they believed anyone trying to transport and process the highly radioactive materials would be detected.

"I am comfortable because of the heightened awareness and security at those plants," Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware, said. But, he said, "I'd be even more comfortable" if technology to replace the radioactive bars could be developed.

Thousands of cobalt-60 rods are used in more than 160 food sterilization centers, 40 in the United States, federal regulators said.

Federal nuclear officials and executives in the sterilization industry said yesterday that it would be extraordinarily difficult for terrorists to steal and use the 18-inch-long rods, the most common radiation source in the industry.

"An individual physically handling an unshielded single source rod would receive a lethal (death within weeks) dose in about a minute, and an incapacitating dose (immediately deadly) in about 20 minutes," said an e-mail statement from Neil A. Sheehan, a spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which licenses businesses using the materials.

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Christian Science Monitor
March 7, 2002

Italian Police Explore Al Qaeda Links In Cyanide Plot

Four cases focus on the recent arrests of North Africans and others allegedly tied to Islamic militant cells.

By Courtney C. Walsh, Special to The Christian Science Monitor

ROME - During a raid on a small Roman apartment frequented by alleged Arabic terrorists arrested at dawn last Friday, police found videos of decapitations and suicide bombings, plus political propaganda for a holy war.

But what set off alarm bells was an Arizona address on a folder of Arabic documents. "We are working with our American colleagues to see if there is a link between this Phoenix address and pilots of the September suicide attack in New York," says Col. Gianfranco Cavallo, a leading police investigator, in an interview. He says Italian and FBI detectives are also exploring the possibility that Lofti Raissi, the Algerian accused of training the Sept. 11 suicide pilots, stayed at the Phoenix address.

Investigators also believe the men arrested Friday may have been part of a network of cells operating throughout Italy and Europe with links to the GIA (Armed Islamic Group) and the GSPC (Salafist Group for Call and Combat), and ultimately with Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network.

Salafism, a philosophy shared by bin Laden, is a pan-Islamic movement advocating a return to the purity of the roots of Islam, as Mohammed and his companions practiced it. The GSPC is an offshoot of the GIA, the most radical antigovernment force in Algeria, which has been waging war on the government for several years. Where the GIA puts priority on overthrowing the Algerian government, the GSPC believes "that if jihad is not international, it has no meaning," says Claude Moniquet, an expert on fundamentalist Islamic groups.

The GSPC is believed to have received funding from bin Laden, and to have sent members to his Afghan training camps. The group was banned in March 2001 in Britain, where police say it raises money from racketeering, smuggling in Algeria, and money laundering. The organization was on President Bush's list of 27 organizations whose assets were frozen after Sept. 11.

Italian authorities are looking for any links between the group arrested last Friday - which included a Pakistani (suspected as the ringleader), a Tunisian, an Algerian and three Iraqis - and a group of nine Moroccans arrested earlier this month after the discovery of a perforation in a tunnel near the US Embassy. So far, the only links between the two groups are cyanide and a mosque whose address was found in the Moroccans' apartment. The mosque was attended by the other group.

In conversations bugged in mosques and apartments and published in the press (which police confirm as authentic), the group led by the Pakistani allegedly discussed the need to find cyanide and also talked about having a pistol, obtaining other arms, killing a policeman, and even the need to eliminate US President George Bush.

The group's alleged leader, Ahamad Naseer, arrested at the Fiumicino airport in Rome on charges of "subversive association and violation of arms" as he returned from Saudi Arabia, is the director of a small makeshift mosque near Rome's main train station.

Chihab Goumri - an Algerian accused of being the "messenger" of the cell and in "direct contact with elements of Islamic fundamentalism," according to published judicial documents - argued that he frequented the mosque to have assistance for a physical handicap resulting from the loss of his left leg in an accident in the early 1990s. In an interrogation Monday, the three Iraqis arrested with Nasser said they were Kurdish refugees who slipped into Italy illegally.

Meanwhile, the investigation into the case of the nine Moroccans continues. Five of them were found with slightly under 10 pounds of potassium-ferrocyanide, a cyanide compound used in agriculture, and maps of the water main located in underground utility tunnels around the American embassy in Rome.

Press leaks and the discovery of the hole in a tunnel containing a water main led to a wave of panic and speculation that the terrorists were trying to contaminate the water supply of central-northern Rome. Though US State Department officials downplayed the risk to the embassy, Cavallo says that the Moroccans had the capacity to create poisonous substances. Along with the cyanide compound, police found a gunpowder substance that could have created the heat needed to release the cyanide gas, he says.

"But what is even more damning are the maps of the tunnels around the embassy," he says. "What were they plotting to do? Police have said the men may have been "small fish" laying ground-work for a more sophisticated operation. The number of people in custody in Italian jails on charges related to international terrorism continues to grow, with around 30 arrested since Sept. 11. This month four men, including Tunisian Essi Sami Ben Khemais, one the alleged leaders of Al Qaeda in Europe, were convicted of selling false documents, recruiting Islamic militants for Al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, organizing illegal immigration into Italy and associating with criminal intent to obtain and transport arms, explosives, and chemicals - the first such terrorists with ties to bin Laden to be convicted since September 11.

Arrested last April, Mr. Khemais is believed by police to have spent time in Afghanistan - though his lawyer denies it - and to have conspired with cells in different European countries to obtain weapons to terrorize civilians. In one wiretapped conversation, he reportedly discussed putting poison gasses in cans of tomatoes and talked of wanting to get permission from the "sheikh" to move forward with the "attack". "Khemais had contacts all over Europe, but especially with Germany, France, England, and Spain," says Inspector Massimo Mazza, head of the Milan office of Italy's antiterrorist police (DIGOS).

In late November, another group of North Africans in Milan was arrested. Mr. Mazza says that they were "in telephone contact with people high up in Al Qaeda and in particular with people running training camps in Afghanistan." Defense lawyers maintain this was a group of young, poor, frustrated immigrants who were "simply blowing off steam" during their taped conversation, and point out that no arms or tangible evidence was found, apart from documents.

Mazza says the only "advanced stage" plan for an attack by Milan cells was on the cathedral of Strasbourg, which was foiled by police. Khemais and another Tunisian were each sentenced to five years, while two other defendants each received four years.

Peter Ford in Paris contributed to this report.

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Wall Street Journal
March 7, 2002

Memo To Mr. Carter: Evil Exists

By Norbert Vollertsen

As a German physician, I was greatly moved by an inscription quoting former President Jimmy Carter at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. -- "[W]e must forge an unshakeable oath with all civilized people that never again will the world stand silent, never again will the world . . . fail to act in time to prevent this terrible crime of genocide . . . We must harness the outrage of our own memories to stamp out oppression wherever it exists."

It is hard to believe that these words came from the same man who recently lambasted President Bush's "axis of evil" speech, calling it "overly simplistic and counterproductive." Nowhere in Mr. Carter's words did I see the caveat "stamp out oppression wherever it exists (excepting North Korea and/or any other dictatorial regime that rapes, murders and systematically starves its own people)." President Carter wrote those words in September 1979 for his President's Commission on the Holocaust. Twenty-three years later, he seems to have forgotten their meaning. President Bush has not. He has chosen to speak out; to borrow Mr. Carter's phrase, he will not "stand silent." He has bravely called North Korea "evil" -- and he is right. I know, because I have seen the evil with my own eyes. From July 1999 to December 2000, I traveled with the German medical group, Cap Anamur, and gained access to some of the Stalinist country's most remote and secretive regions.

What I witnessed could best be described as unbelievable deprivation. As I wrote for this newspaper last April, "In the hospitals one sees kids too small for their age, with hollow eyes and skin stretched tight across their faces. They wear blue-and-white striped pajamas, like the children in Hitler's Auschwitz."

It became clear to me that Kim Jong Il and his Stalinist regime had made little effort to distribute medical supplies and food to the people who needed it most. I soon realized that North Korea's starvation is not the result of natural disasters or even lack of natural resources. Like the Holocaust in Europe, the horror in North Korea is man-made. Twenty-two million people suffer under a dictatorial regime that uses torture, surveillance and starvation as tools to control its own people. Only the regime's overthrow will end it.

I was eventually expelled from North Korea because of my open criticism of the government. Since then, I have been on a global campaign to raise interest in what I can only describe as crimes against humanity and genocide in North Korea. This is a country where food is used as a weapon against any opposition, Christians are persecuted, women sexually abused and young children forced into labor. Still, the world either doesn't know, doesn't care or doesn't want to believe.

Last month I had the opportunity to interview around 250 North Korean defectors near the China-North Korea border and was truly horrified by their stories. Most had escaped from hidden concentration camps where they suffered and witnessed routine torture, mass-execution, baby-killing, rape, human biological experiments (including the effects of anthrax) and, of course, starvation. These people were talking about hell, not paradise. Like Mr. Bush, they call it evil too.

As a German born after the Holocaust, I feel it is my duty to speak out. But strangely, few are willing to listen. In my native Germany and the rest of Europe they speak of "engagement." In South Korea they speak of a "sunshine policy" to help Kim Jong Il modernize and liberalize. What they don't understand is that he is not interested in helping his people; rather he is interested only -- like Hitler and Stalin -- in clinging to power. In my opinion, "engagement" and "sunshine" are not only synonyms for appeasement, they are synonyms for cowardice.

Now, the very same people who wish to engage a state that starves its own people are calling President Bush a "war monger" for using the word "evil." Ironically, but not surprisingly, it is the "refined" European diplomats, "liberal" American newspapers, and "politically correct" human-rights activists who are most outraged at Mr. Bush's choice of words. They should be ashamed of themselves.

President Bush has rightly identified North Korea as a prison state that uses terrorism against its own people. Moreover, his "axis of evil" speech has sent a strong message to the North Korean people that they are not forgotten -- and they are listening. Every North Korean defector I spoke to over several weeks was delighted by President Bush's words. For the first time in their lives they feel as if the outside world understands the hell they have endured. Moreover, they are full of hope that, like President Reagan's "evil empire" speech, President Bush's "axis of evil" speech will eventually lead to the collapse of Kim Jong Il's brutal regime.

Perhaps those who are outraged with President Bush's choice of words should ask survivors of the Holocaust, survivors of the Soviet gulag and survivors of North Korea's concentration camps what they think of Mr. Bush's use of the word "evil."

Perhaps Mr. Carter should return to the Holocaust Memorial Musuem that he helped build and take a look at another inscription there, this one from the book of Genesis: "What have you done? Hark, thy brother's blood cries out to me from the ground!"

Dr. Vollertsen, a physician from Germany, worked in hospitals in North Korea from July 1999 to December 2000.

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Washington Post

March 8, 2002

Pg. 29

Annan Urges Iraq To Permit Arms Inspectors' Return

By Colum Lynch, Special to The Washington Post

UNITED NATIONS, March 7 -- U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan appealed to Iraqi Foreign Minister Naji Sabri today to permit the return of U.N. weapons inspectors in a bid to avert a military confrontation between Iraq and the United States.

In his first direct talks with a representative of the Iraqi government since President Bush demanded the return of U.N. inspectors in November, Annan made it clear that Baghdad has no choice but to comply with U.N. resolutions requiring the elimination of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs, according to U.S. and U.N. officials. He also pressed Iraq to account for Kuwaitis who disappeared during the Persian Gulf War in 1991.

"I wouldn't want to see a widening conflict in the region," Annan said before beginning the discussions. "I would want to see a situation where we are able to solve our differences diplomatically and that Iraq comes into compliance."

While there was no indication that Iraq would agree to allow inspectors back in the country, U.N. diplomats said Sabri was more conciliatory than his predecessor, Mohammed Saeed Sahaf, who subjected Annan last year to a litany of Iraqi grievances. Annan agreed to a request by Sabri to resume the discussions next month, after the March 27-28 Arab League summit in Beirut.

Annan also made a commitment to assist in the search for Iraqi prisoners of war lost during the Gulf War. Iraq agreed to return some of the property it stole from Kuwait during its 1990 occupation of that country.

The Bush administration remains deeply skeptical about Iraq's intention to comply with the U.N. demands.

On the eve of today's talks, U.S. officials released evidence allegedly showing that Iraq has been converting dump trucks bought through a U.N. humanitarian program into military vehicles, in violation of U.N. sanctions.

"It was perfectly clear that Iraq is not ready to comply with U.N. resolutions," Ric Grenell, a spokesman for the U.S. mission to the United Nations, said after the meeting.

A statement issued by Annan's spokesman, Fred Eckhard, characterized the discussion as "frank and useful." Sabri described the meeting as "positive and constructive."

Eckhard said the "Iraqi side raised a number of specific concerns, such as lifting of sanctions, 'no-fly' zones and establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East."

Iraq says that it has already met its obligation to eliminate its banned weapons programs and that the Security Council is obliged to end the 11-year-old embargo. It also maintains that the United States and Britain have no legal grounds for conducting air strikes against Iraqi antiaircraft batteries in their enforcement of the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq.

Although Iraq continues to reject the legitimacy of U.N. inspectors, the Iraqi delegation listened to a briefing by Hans Blix, the organization's top weapons inspector, on the structure and goals of the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. Blix sought to assure the Iraqis that the inspectors would be "impartial" and would not be used to spy on the Iraqi government, according to diplomats.

While Annan cited signs of "flexibility on the part of Iraq" before the talks began, U.N. diplomats said it is too soon to judge whether Iraq would be prepared to allow inspectors back into the country for the first time in three years.

"It's much too early to make a judgment on whether this is for real," said Jeremy Greenstock, Britain's ambassador to the United Nations. "But the fact that there seems to be a willingness to come back in mid-April indicates Iraq wants the process to continue. That could be good news."

Some analysts said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's decision to send his envoy to today's talks was simply a ploy to buy time. "Saddam will keep the diplomatic track alive without having to do anything . . . and he'll continue to try to

divide the Security Council," said Charles Duelfer, the former deputy chairman of the U.N. Special Commission, the precursor of Blix's commission. "He's going to wait and see if the United States is really serious about moving against the regime."

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Jerusalem Post
March 8, 2002

US Boosts Israel's Missile-Detecting System

By Janine Zacharia

WASHINGTON (March 8) - The US has transferred to Israel an advanced system to help it detect incoming ballistic missiles, like Scuds from Iraq, more quickly. The system links up with the Arrow anti-missile system and enhances its early warning capability, an Israeli official and a US legislator said yesterday.

As talk of a US strike on Iraq has mounted, Israel has pushed for US assistance in securing better early warning capability, as Iraq is expected to retaliate against Israel, as it did during the 1991 Gulf War. The US had been initially reluctant to link its system to Israel's.

Congressman Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) thanked Secretary of State Colin Powell for providing the technological assistance.

"In a little-reported action, but I think vital to what's coming, thank you for providing early-warning radar assistance to Israel," Kirk said. "The United States is moving to provide real-time missile data to Israel."

And given what may or may not happen in the Middle East, avoiding 41 Scuds falling on Israel is an important goal of the United States."

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Birmingham (AL) News
March 7, 2002

Shelby To Army: Make Incinerator Safe

By Mary Orndorff, News Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON Sen. Richard Shelby warned the top U.S. Army official Wednesday to guard against conflicts of interest that might compromise the safety of Anniston residents living near the chemical weapons incinerator. The Alabama Republican told Secretary of the Army Thomas White that Calhoun County officials should be allowed to use the kind of emergency response computer software they feel is best, not one promoted by sales people with military connections.

"I think that message was out there today. I hope he received it," Shelby said after the hearing. White was appearing before the Senate subcommittee that oversees the Pentagon's budget.

The secretary did not respond specifically to the software issue but said he was confident that all remaining disagreements over safety and money would be resolved "so we can get on with the business of destroying" the chemical weapons stored at the Anniston Army Depot.

Mike Burney, director of Calhoun County's Emergency Management Agency, said Wednesday that he raised the potential conflict of issue earlier this year because the Army official promoting the software had ties to the lab that developed it. But Burney said he has since received approval to use an upgraded version of a different software that he and his staff prefers.

The computer system they want gives emergency responders detailed, immediate information about an accident and conditions, which allows them to better make and communicate decisions about how to react.

The Army's incinerator is scheduled to start destroying 2,254 tons of outdated chemical weapons this September. State, local and federal officials are responsible for preparing a plan in case an accident causes some of those deadly materials to escape into the atmosphere, but repeated disagreements about that plan could delay the burning. Gov. Don Siegelman has filed a lawsuit and Alabama's congressional delegation has promised to intervene if enough safety measures are not funded and implemented.

That lawsuit sparked a drive by Anniston-area business leaders who want the Army to proceed with destruction of the material. Members of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce are circulating a petition opposing the governor's attempt to block the incinerator.

At Wednesday's hearing, White assured Shelby that waste from the incineration process will be a hazardous material that can be disposed of by commercial contractors and not a substance containing the chemicals. Mike Abrams, a spokesman for the incinerator operation in Anniston, said a contractor has not yet been hired. Some of the liquid brine will be shipped off in tanker trucks, he said.

Also at the hearing, other senators urged Army officials to consider commissioning a campaign medal or ribbon specifically for those who serve in the war against terrorism. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki agreed such a recognition, similar to those issued for past wars, would be appropriate.

And White said National Guard personnel now on duty in the nation's airports will be replaced by other federal security officers and redeployed elsewhere by the end of May.

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