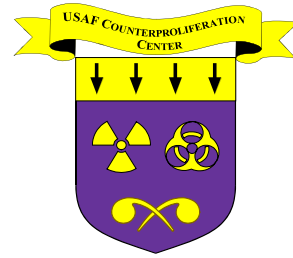


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4 Nations Thought To Possess Smallpox

Iraq, N. Korea Named, Two Officials Say

By Barton Gellman, Washington Post Staff Writer

A Bush administration intelligence review has concluded that four nations -- including Iraq and North Korea -- possess covert stocks of the smallpox pathogen, according to two officials who received classified briefings. Records and operations manuals captured this year in Afghanistan and elsewhere, they said, also disclosed that Osama bin Laden devoted money and personnel to pursue smallpox, among other biological weapons. These assessments, though unrelated, have helped drive the U.S. government to the brink of a mass vaccination campaign that would be among the costliest steps, financially and politically, in a year-long effort to safeguard the U.S. homeland. Public health authorities in and out of government project that the vaccine itself, widely administered, could kill more Americans -- 300 is a common estimate, and some are higher -- than any terrorist attack save that of Sept. 11, 2001. It has been left to President Bush to resolve a deadlock among his advisers. Vice President Cheney is said by participants in the debate to be pressing for rapid, universal inoculation, while Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy G. Thompson prefers a voluntary program that would wait at least two years for an improved vaccine.

In public, the White House has described its smallpox concerns in only hypothetical terms, and until now the gravity of its assessment has not been known. Bush administration officials did not share their evidence with a panel of outside scientists established to advise them on smallpox. Some officials said the reticence results from unwillingness to compromise intelligence sources. Others cited fear of provoking public demands for action the government is not yet prepared to take.

Washington's anxiety about smallpox, and limited intelligence-sharing with friendly governments, have prompted urgent requests from allies in the Middle East -- including Jordan and Kuwait -- for assistance in obtaining vaccine before the outbreak of war with Iraq. The National Security Council's Deputies Committee, a panel of officials just below Cabinet rank, met last Tuesday to weigh the allies' requests.

Smallpox, which spreads by respiration and kills roughly one in three of those infected, took hundreds of millions of lives during a recorded history dating to Pharaonic Egypt. The last naturally occurring case was in 1978, and the disease was declared eradicated on May 8, 1980. All but two countries reported by Dec. 9, 1983, that they no longer possessed the virus, but the World Health Organization had no means to verify those reports. Seed cultures are now held officially in only two heavily guarded laboratories, one in Atlanta and the other in Koltsovo, Siberia. The United States renounced germ warfare in 1969 and has undertaken no known offensive program since.

An authoritative official said there is "no reason" to believe bin Laden succeeded in obtaining the smallpox pathogen. Bin Laden's efforts are significant chiefly because U.S. policymakers believe he would use it.

"Al Qaeda is interested in acquiring biological weapons, to include smallpox," according to a classified intelligence summary prepared for senior officials debating options on the scope of a preventive vaccination campaign. Officials who read the homeland security briefing said bin Laden's organization spent money on the effort, but gave higher priority to other biological and chemical agents. The "top five list" for al Qaeda, one official said, included anthrax, the nerve agent ricin, and botulinum toxin.

The U.S. government has known since the early 1990s about Soviet-era smallpox weapons, and collected circumstantial evidence of programs elsewhere. But substantial new reporting has circulated in recent months. "This is not an issue where once every two years we put out an intelligence estimate," one official said. "There's an ongoing requirement to assess the threat. I see reports on this every other week."

The CIA now assesses that four nations -- Iraq, North Korea, Russia and, to the surprise of some specialists, France -- have undeclared samples of the smallpox virus.

The agency's Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation and Arms Control Center (WINPAC) described a sliding scale of confidence in those assessments in a briefing prepared last spring. The briefing circulated among senior homeland security, public health and national security officials. Though the quality of its information varied from "very high" to "medium," one official said the report covered only nations for which "we have good evidence."

WINPAC placed Russia in the top category, saying that contrary to diplomatic assurances, Russia retains covert stocks of the virus. The Soviet Union produced smallpox by the ton -- a laborious endeavor, since the standard method is to grow cultures in the lining of chicken eggs. Ken Alibek, who was second in command of "black biology" at Biopreparat before he defected in 1992, said in an interview that he supervised production of the virus in liquid form, suitable for delivery on intercontinental missiles. U.S. officials said they generally accept his account.

Iraq and France are assessed to have smallpox with high, but not very high, confidence.

U.S. officials said the French program is believed to be defensive in nature, and some of them expressed consternation that its inclusion in the WINPAC report was disclosed to a reporter. It could not be learned whether the Bush administration has objected to, or sought information about, the French program. France is one of five members of the U.N. Security Council with a veto, and it is the linchpin of U.S. diplomatic efforts to establish a legal basis for war with Iraq.

Jacques Drucker, who stepped down recently as director of France's National Public Health Surveillance Center, said his country favors research with live smallpox that is forbidden under present conventions. France recently opened one of the world's only Biological Containment Level 4 facilities. Drucker said the Jean Merieux Laboratory in Lyon works with viruses that "could be used for bioterrorist purposes," and mentioned hemorrhagic fevers such as ebola, Marburg and lassa. The lab is "equipped for smallpox," he said, but "I would suspect that if there was variola virus left in France it would be on the military laboratory research facilities."

Some of the evidence on Iraq emerged from unpublished discoveries of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), which searched for prohibited weapons after the Persian Gulf War. In 1995, David Kelly, a British inspector, led a team to the maintenance shop of the State Establishment for Medical Appliances on the edge of Baghdad. There he found a freeze drier labeled "smallpox." Two years later, on Oct. 7, 1997, inspector Diane Seaman seized a document on the grounds of the Al Rasheed Military Hospital describing vaccines currently in use for Iraqi troops. Third on the list was smallpox. Confronted with other evidence on pox research, Iraq's chief bioweaponer, Hazem Ali, told UNSCOM inspectors that he had considered camelpox as a weapon because Iraqis, unlike Americans, spent enough time near camels to be immune.

Richard Spertzel, UNSCOM's chief biological inspector, said that explanation was laughable. "Only one person ever died of camelpox," Spertzel said in an interview. Ali was "much too good a scientist to believe the story." On Jan. 14, 1991, the Defense Intelligence Agency said an Iraqi agent described, in medically accurate terms, military smallpox casualties he said he saw in 1985 or 1986. Two weeks later, the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center reported that eight of 69 Iraqi prisoners of war whose blood was tested showed current immunity to smallpox, which had not occurred naturally in Iraq for 20 years. The same prisoners had been inoculated for anthrax, a well-established Iraqi bioweapon.

More recently, according to the WINPAC report, a former Soviet scientist told U.S. officials that his country "transferred [smallpox] technology in the early 1990s to Iraq." Northern Iraq suffered one of the last known smallpox epidemics in 1971-72. The WINPAC report assessed that Iraq "retained samples from the 1971 outbreak." The last country on WINPAC's list is North Korea, which the authors wrote "has a longstanding and active biological weapons program." Though assessing that Pyongyang has the smallpox pathogen, WINPAC said its evidence was of "medium" quality.

On March 5, 1993, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service reported that "North Korea is performing applied military-biological research" with "pathogens for malignant anthrax, cholera, bubonic plague and smallpox." Gordon Oehler, then head of WINPAC, told Congress that the Russian report was "not a bad summary." Much more recently, sources said, the United States has obtained reports of ongoing pox research and manufacture of vaccine. "I've spent a lot of time trying to understand the biological weapons threat," one policymaker said in an interview, "and I have concluded on a very personal basis that there is a small chance that we will have definitive evidence, smoking gun evidence, for countries like North Korea, very closed societies."

Confidence about the smallpox evidence varies somewhat among the 14 U.S. intelligence agencies and departments. "The assessment is, they have it," said one official, speaking as he held his own office's written summaries of evidence on North Korea and Iraq. "We don't say 70 percent certainty. We assess that they have it."

Officials who agreed that the evidence is not decisive said few differences exist in the ultimate judgment of national security and homeland defense officials. One person who has access to the compartmented intelligence on smallpox offered to "bet my next year's salary" that the four countries named in WINPAC's report have live seed cultures. Bush administration officials with central roles in smallpox policy said the government-commissioned Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices was unequipped for its ostensible role of balancing the risks of vaccination against the risks of a smallpox attack. The committee recommended against a broad vaccination campaign, but many members said they would change their views if they knew a rogue nation possessed the virus.

"They give the scientific assessment of what the risks of vaccination are," a senior administration official said. "They do not have the same amount of information that is circulated around this issue here."

Those who disclosed the intelligence assessments described above, speaking on condition of anonymity, were not authorized by the White House to do so. Those assigned to speak for the administration's views, who also declined to be identified, would not discuss intelligence reports. They hewed to their public position, as one of them put it, that "there is a concern with regard to North Korea and Iraq that they may have smallpox."

U.S. allies' smallpox fears come in part from U.S. reports and -- especially in Jordan -- from independent intelligence on the Iraqi threat. In an interview, Kuwaiti ambassador Salem Abdullah Jaber Sabah acknowledged that his government asked for vaccine last summer "in readiness for any eventuality."

Two U.S. officials called the requests unlikely to be granted. The scarcity of vaccine, and likely repercussions in domestic and coalition politics, permit Bush to do no more, they said, than offer assurances of help if Iraq's neighbors suffer an outbreak.

Cheney, who confronted biological threats as defense secretary years ago, was energized about smallpox by a videotape and briefing shortly after Sept. 11, 2001. In a war game called Dark Winter, former senator Sam Nunn played a president who failed to contain a fictional smallpox outbreak that began in Oklahoma City. It spread in less than two weeks to 25 states and 15 countries overseas, inflicting "massive civilian casualties."

"It's a dramatic briefing," Cheney's chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, recalled, "but we were well on this road already." Libby said Cheney favors "a forward-leaning position on protecting Americans from this threat," but declined to describe his advice to the president.

At Health and Human Services, officials said, Thompson has been influenced by doubts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"If you look at the vice president's office, they're thinking strategic, not public health," said one debate participant. He cited the swine flu debacle of 1976, when President Gerald Ford had to abandon plans for universal inoculation after people starting dying of the vaccine and others developed Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare and occasionally fatal paralysis. "If something bad happens, the public is not going to be blaming Dick Cheney, they're going to be blaming Tommy Thompson. And the fact is they're going to be blaming the president. That's why the political people are weighing in, and that's why the decision is still sitting on his desk."

Staff researcher Lucy Shackelford contributed to this report.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5113-2002Nov4.html>

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Los Angeles Times

November 5, 2002

'Nonlethal' Weapons Vital, Panel Says

Military may need to control hostile people, so study is needed, council reports.

Deadly incident in Russia makes issue more sensitive.

By Aaron Zitner, Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON -- A panel of the National Research Council called Monday for more study by the military of "nonlethal" chemicals that might control crowds or hostile people — a particularly sensitive subject after Russian forces took as many as 118 lives last month by using a gas to end a hostage standoff in a Moscow theater.

The panel's recommendation was part of a broad endorsement of the idea that military commanders need a wide range of nonlethal weapons on hand because they are being called on to serve in more situations short of outright war.

In 1996, the Pentagon started a small but formal effort to study new types of rubber bullets, underwater systems to protect ships, energy beams to stop vehicles and other technologies that might incapacitate people or machinery without causing death.

The goal was to better respond to hostile civilians during peacekeeping missions, humanitarian efforts and other such situations.

In addition, the Pentagon saw a role for nonlethal weapons in defending ships and buildings, especially when there is little time to determine whether an oncoming vehicle is friendly or carrying explosives.

"Terrorists often put themselves in the middle of noncombatants — so how do you deal with that?" asked Miriam E. John, a senior administrator at Sandia National Laboratories and chairwoman of the committee that wrote the report. "You can't go in and blow it to pieces. You have to have some options to neutralize folks, so you can then sort out the bad guys from the good guys," she added.

Nonlethal weapons, John said, "should be a more integral part of war-fighting capabilities."

The Navy office that requested the report had no comment Monday.

The National Research Council is part of the National Academies of Science, a congressionally chartered organization that advises the federal government on science and technology.

The National Research Council panel that wrote the report recommended that the Navy “invest in a richer portfolio” of research in several areas, including chemical agents.

Chemical agents are the most controversial area of nonlethal technology, largely because their use is sharply limited by an international treaty called the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The treaty bars the use of any chemical agents — even tear gas — in warfare, but allows their use for law enforcement and riot control.

Some critics have accused the United States and other nations of developing chemical weapons for war under the guise of law enforcement. Pentagon spokesmen have said they are conducting no research on nonlethal chemical compounds.

The National Research Council panel said that nonlethal chemicals have “compelling applications in engine stopping and crowd control that cannot be achieved by other means.”

It recommended that the Navy boost its research into “calmative” agents and foul-smelling “malodorants,” including more study of their effect on the human body and behavior. It also called for research into ways to disperse the chemicals.

The panel said that no work should proceed that violates the Chemical Weapons Convention. But John also said it was difficult to know what work was allowed or barred by the treaty.

“We said that depending on who you talked to, you can get any interpretation of the treaty that you wanted,” John said.

She said the Pentagon should issue a clear interpretation.

The report comes just over a week after Russian forces used a gas, identified as a version of the opiate fentanyl, to end a hostage standoff with Chechen guerrillas in a Moscow theater. About 120 of the 750 captives died, nearly all of them from the gas’ effects.

Edward Hammond of the Sunshine Project, which has been trying to obtain and publicize documents related to U.S. chemical agent research, said the panel’s report was “a body blow to global chemical weapons control.”

“The panel’s findings will be used by the Pentagon to redouble their chemical weapons development efforts, with potentially disastrous results for arms control,” he said. “Other countries will follow suit, and controls on chemical weapons could quickly destabilize.”

Mark Wheelis, a professor of microbiology at UC Davis who has written widely on chemical and biological weapon controls, said research on nonlethal chemicals would “erode the norms against using chemicals as a weapon.”

He said the same manufacturing equipment and delivery systems for nonlethal chemicals can be used for lethal agents.

“We would make it far more difficult to figure out if other nations have lethal chemical weapons or not,” he said.

“It’s much easier to hide a lethal chemical weapons program if you have a nonlethal program.”

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-nonlethal5nov05.0.6311363.story?coll=la%2Dhome%2Dtodays%2Dtimes>

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Washington Post
November 5, 2002
Pg. 20

Hussein Appears To Soften Stance On Arms Inspections

Iraqi Leader Awaits Terms of Resolution Proposed by U.S.

By Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Washington Post Foreign Service

CAIRO, Nov. 4 -- President Saddam Hussein hinted today that Iraq might be willing to comply with a new U.N. Security Council resolution proposed by the United States that calls for more stringent weapons inspections, apparently reversing earlier opposition to any changes in the inspection process.

Hussein’s government has insisted for weeks it would agree to inspections only under existing arrangements with the United Nations and not under new rules sought by the Bush administration that are designed to give inspectors greater authority to conduct unannounced searches of Hussein’s palaces and other sensitive Iraqi installations.

But today, Iraq’s state-run television network quoted Hussein as telling a far-right Austrian politician, Joerg Haider, that Iraq would wait to see the terms of a new resolution before deciding whether to comply. “If a resolution is issued that respects the U.N. Charter, international law and Iraq’s sovereignty, security and independence, and does not provide a cover for America’s ill intentions, we will look into whether we will deal with it,” Hussein was quoted as saying.

In a separate meeting with an envoy from South Africa, Hussein was even more explicit. The Iraqi leader, according to state television, said his nation would “respect any decision that is issued in accordance with the U.N. Charter and international law.”

At the same time, Hussein suggested he would be unwilling to cooperate with the inspectors if he regarded the resolution as simply a pretext for U.S. military action. “If the American pressure, enticements and threats lead to decisions that contradict with the interests, security and independence of Iraq, we will defend our people, Iraq’s interests and its security,” he was quoted as saying.

Hussein’s statements appeared to indicate a softening in tone, aimed perhaps at strengthening the hands of France, Russia and China in this week’s Security Council debate over the new resolution. The three nations, which have veto power in the council, oppose U.S. and British efforts to include in the resolution a threat of military action if Iraq fails to comply with the inspections.

Diplomats from the three countries have argued that Iraq should be given a chance to cooperate before the use of force is contemplated. They contend that the authorization for military action should be considered in a second resolution only if Iraq obstructs the inspectors.

The proposed U.S. resolution would declare Iraq in “material breach” of its obligations to destroy weapons of mass destruction and threaten “serious consequences” if Hussein’s government fails to cooperate with inspectors. The draft would give Iraq 30 days to declare all of its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programs.

U.S. officials have said they plan to introduce a revised draft this week to address the concerns of the three nations. Iraq announced in mid-September that it would accept the unconditional return of weapons inspectors, who left in 1998 after a dispute over which facilities they would be allowed to visit. But a week after the announcement, senior Iraqi officials insisted the deal would be off the table if there were a new resolution.

Iraqi officials had insisted that inspectors should have to follow previously agreed procedures when visiting presidential sites, including providing the Iraqi government with advance notice and conducting the inspections in the presence of diplomats. That stance was articulated by top officials as recently as Sunday, when Foreign Minister Naji Sabri called the U.S. draft “an evil American resolution” and said his country would not accept its terms.

“This resolution is rejected by the international community, and it will never be accepted by anybody,” Sabri said. Iraqi television did not provide any explanation for Hussein’s apparent shift.

In the meeting with Haider, Hussein reiterated his claim that Iraq does not possess weapons of mass destruction. He asserted that “America’s main goal is to create a pretext and an attempt to cheat public opinion and to hit our scientific and technical institutions.”

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A5402-2002Nov4.html>

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New York Times
November 5, 2002

Moscow Toll Revives Concerns Over Chemical Attacks

By Lawrence K. Altman, M.D.

Russia’s decision to blow an aerosolized form of a powerful narcotic through the ventilation system of a theater to end a hostage crisis in Moscow late last month raised anew an inevitable and terrifying question: what if a terrorist unleashed a potentially lethal chemical in this country?

Particularly since Sept. 11, many public health officials have worried about possible bioterrorist attacks with chemicals, smallpox or other microbes. Now, the use of the narcotic fentanyl has refocused attention on those concerns, particularly in light of Russian doctors’ criticism that their government did not organize enough rescue workers to give victims an antidote, naloxone.

Time is critical in seeking the identity of any chemical used as a weapon because the body can wash it out or break it down into other compounds in minutes, leaving health officials unsure what the substance is or how to treat its effects.

Timing of treatment is also crucial because many chemicals start producing damage immediately and delayed treatment can permanently damage the brain and other organs. Antidotes exist for many chemical agents, but not for many others. In such cases, all doctors might be able to offer is fresh air and supportive care.

Dr. Lewis R. Goldfrank, who directs emergency medicine at Bellevue Medical Center and at New York City’s Poison Control Center, voiced confidence in the ability of American health care to respond successfully to a chemical attack.

“We’d have no difficulty recognizing” the chemical and providing the appropriate care, Dr. Goldfrank said. But the Moscow disaster and a theoretical attack on this country differ in crucial ways.

Russian officials knew what agent they used, although they did not publicly identify fentanyl until four days after the attack. Fentanyl is a short-acting painkiller that is 100 times as powerful as morphine and accounts for about half of the use of anesthetics in the United States, said Dr. James E. Cottrell, who is chairman of anesthesiology at the State University of New York Downstate in Brooklyn and president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists. But in the first hours of a chemical attack, authorities may not know the agent’s identity. Because chemicals often bring on classic symptoms, doctors may guess the type of agent by observing the victims and their physical reactions and use that information to begin therapy.

If the agent is a narcotic like fentanyl or heroin, victims will probably be calm, their pupils pinpoint size, their breathing and heart rates slow and their blood pressures low. Other types of drugs could produce opposite symptoms. If it is scopolamine, an anti-motion sickness drug that robbers have used to incapacitate victims, people may be delirious.

A toxin that causes botulism will lead to double vision, difficulty speaking, weakness and other neurological problems.

Emergency responses to chemical attacks are based in part on what doctors learned in World War I and more recently from heroin overdoses, which can be treated with naloxone.

After Sept. 11, public health officials were given increased government money to buy equipment and train workers for a possible chemical attack.

Standard procedure at the scene of an attack calls for evacuating victims, getting people to fresh air, putting masks around victims’ faces to help provide respiratory support for those needing it, placing breathing tubes in windpipes and determining victims’ conditions to decide who is sent to a hospital first.

All emergency medical service ambulances in New York City and most large American cities carry naloxone, Dr. Goldfrank said. In many cities standard protocol calls for immediately injecting sugar water (in case of an insulin coma) and naloxone into someone who is unconscious and a suspected poisoning victim.

Ideally, workers would decontaminate victims at the scene by removing their clothes and giving them showers. At a hospital, patients could receive showers outside. Bellevue soon expects to complete a new \$500,000 decontamination unit, where large numbers of victims can be washed down by huge amounts of water. Many other hospitals are equipped with tents and portable units for such emergencies.

While treatment progresses, toxicologists will use laboratory tests to try to quickly identify the chemical used in the attack. All major cities have equipment to identify or rule out certain classes of chemicals. Many hazardous materials teams carry mass spectrometers and other analytical tools that can screen a large number of chemicals and provide specific identification of an agent, said Jerome M. Hauer, who directs the Office of Public Health Preparedness in the Department of Health and Human Services.

But toxicologists must guard against misreading the information and falsely identifying a particular chemical unrelated to the attack. Another worry is that if terrorists develop and use a novel agent, American scientists may not have a good standard to detect it, Mr. Hauer said.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/05/health/policy/05DOCS.html>

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New York Times
November 6, 2002

U.S. Would Use Drones To Attack Iraqi Targets

By Eric Schmitt

WASHINGTON, Nov. 5 — In a war with Iraq, the Air Force would use the same missile-firing drones that killed one of Al Qaeda’s senior leaders in Yemen to attack Iraqi air defense radars, mobile Scud missile launchers and possibly sensitive targets in Baghdad, military officials said today.

In Afghanistan, the Air Force flew unarmed Predator planes, mostly for reconnaissance missions or to designate targets for piloted bombers. The Central Intelligence Agency used armed Predators extensively there to attack suspected Qaeda leaders and expanded its killer-drone operations beyond Afghanistan for the first time on Sunday, blasting Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi and five associates in Yemen.

About a month ago, the Air Force began patrolling the skies over Iraq’s southern no-flight zone with remote-controlled Predators armed with two Hellfires, an air-to-ground, laser-guided weapon used effectively by Apache helicopter gunships against Iraqi tanks in the 1991 Persian Gulf war.

The armed Predators have so far fired three or four missiles at Iraqi targets, including radar dishes, Air Force officials said today. The total number of missiles fired by C.I.A. and military drones in Afghanistan and Iraq is classified, but officials put the number at around 70 to 80.

“On targets, it’s effective,” Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said last month.

An ungainly, propeller-driven craft that flies as slowly as 80 miles per hour and is guided by an operator at a television monitor hundreds of miles away, the Predator has proved a formidable weapon in the campaign against terror.

Last November, a Predator operated by the C.I.A. was used to coordinate a strike in which one of Osama bin Laden’s closest lieutenants, Muhammad Atef, was killed in Kabul.

With its ability to loiter continuously for 24 hours or more at 15,000 feet above the battlefield, the Predator can send live video to AC-130 gunships or command posts around the world without putting American pilots at risk.

Its radar, infrared sensors and color video camera can track vehicles at night and through clouds. The video is sharp enough to make out people on the ground from more than three miles away.

“The real advantage, of course, that the Predator brings, armed or unarmed, is the fact that it’s persistent,” General Myers said. “It’s over the target area for long periods of time, and it can move between targets.”

In any offensive against Iraq, the Air Force would probably use a combination of armed and unarmed Predators flying from Ali al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, military officials said today. The Predators flying over Afghanistan have operated from an air base in Jacobabad, Pakistan.

Armed Predators could play a role in locating Saddam Hussein’s mobile biological weapons laboratories or destroying targets in Baghdad that could be too risky for piloted aircraft.

“The capability of using unmanned combat vehicles, particularly with weapons that can be precisely delivered over heavily defended areas, obviously yields some operational advantages,” said an Air Force official.

The Air Force has about 50 Predators, but only a handful are equipped to launch the Hellfire missiles that pack a 14-pound, custom-designed charge of blast-fragment explosives. The C.I.A. has a small, undetermined number of armed drones.

Newer versions of the Predator, made by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems Inc. of San Diego, at \$4.5 million apiece, are rolling off the production lines at the rate of about two aircraft a month, Air Force officials said today.

The Predators are not without shortcomings. Like any small plane, they cannot fly in stormy weather, and have been prone to icing. The plane also can be vulnerable to enemy antiaircraft fire. At least nine Air Force Predators and one C.I.A. drone have crashed during missions involving Afghanistan or Iraq since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

The Predator’s major combat debut came in 1995 over Bosnia, where it provided sharp images of the battlefield in what the military calls “real time.” A year before the Sept. 11 attacks, unarmed C.I.A. drones captured on video a tall turban-wearing man in Afghanistan that many intelligence officials believed was Mr. bin Laden. But the Predators were not equipped to fire missiles.

The use of the armed Predator in counterterrorism was years in the making, coming only after settlement of a long-running argument between the military and C.I.A. over who should have ultimate authority for firing its missiles.

That disagreement, officials said, persisted in the months before Sept. 11 and was resolved only after a Predator missed a chance on the first night of the Afghan war to attack a convoy that some said included Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban leader. The understanding reached after that missed opportunity gave the C.I.A. for the first time the authority to strike beyond a narrow range of counterterrorism targets.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/06/international/middleeast/06PRED.html>

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Washington Times

November 6, 2002

Pg. 3

U.N. Allowed Iraqi Purchase Of Agent Usable For Weapons

By Bill Gertz, The Washington Times

The United Nations overruled U.S. government objections and allowed Iraq to buy a specialty chemical that U.S. intelligence officials say will boost Baghdad’s chemical and biological warfare agents.

A large quantity of a chemical known as colloidal silicon dioxide was ordered by the Iraqis in August 2001 and held up by the U.S. government because of concerns about its use.

However, the United Nations approved the sale and it was shipped to Iraq last month, said Hasmik Egin, a U.N. spokeswoman.

Colloidal silicon dioxide is used in making commercial products such as glass or electronic-circuit boards.

But the superfine powder also has a military use. It is a key element in producing what are known as “dusty” chemical or biological weapons, agents that are able to penetrate protective suits, equipment and facilities, U.S. intelligence officials said.

“The U.N. is helping the Iraqis to enhance their biological and chemical weapons,” said an intelligence official familiar with reports of the chemical sale.

The chemical is not contained on the United Nations’ list of banned equipment and material known as the Goods Review List (GRL), said Miss Egin, a spokeswoman for the U.N. oil-for-food program in Iraq.

“If it is not a GRL item, it is up for approval,” Miss Egin said in a telephone interview.

The initial contact for the colloidal silicon dioxide was “placed on hold” by the U.S. government, Miss Egin said. When additional information on the sale was provided to a special sanctions committee, “that hold was lifted,” she said.

The first shipment of the chemical was carried out under procedures that have since been changed, she said.

The second contract for the chemical was rejected as “noncompliant” with the Goods Review List but is under review by the U.N. Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, known as UNMOVIC, Miss Egin said.

The supplier of the chemical and the size of the shipment were not identified.

A CIA spokesman declined to comment.

According to chemical-weapons specialists, colloidal silicon dioxide, also known as silica sol, has particles so small they are largely unaffected by gravity.

As a result, adding the particles to a mixture of chemical or biological agent will enhance the lethality of the agent by making it easier to disperse.

Eric Croddy, a chemical- and biological-weapons specialist, said colloidal silicon dioxide is a fine powder that could greatly enhance nerve or toxin weapons.

“We know the Iraqis did prepare dusty mustard” agent, Mr. Croddy said. “In the desert, where temperatures reach 104 degrees, they want to make sure their agents don’t dissipate in the breeze.”

Colloidal silicon dioxide would also enhance the killing power of the nerve agent VX, said Mr. Croddy, who is a researcher with the Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, Calif.

“If you have a dust, the agent can get everywhere and can defeat protective gear,” he said.

Mr. Croddy said the U.S. government knows about the utility of silicon dioxide because it was used in U.S. weapons development in the past.

Mr. Croddy said in a recent article that U.S. intelligence agencies estimate that the use of a dusty nerve agent can cause as high as 38 percent fatalities in troops wearing full protective gear.

“With a concern that dusty agents might defeat chemical protective masks and garment ensembles, U.S. military researchers subsequently looked to topical skin protectants for additional protection against dusty agents,” he said.

“Because Iraq has proven artillery systems for chemical delivery, the alleged Iraqi development of a dusty VX formulation further increases the chemical exposure risks to U.S. troops that may be operating in theatre,” Mr. Croddy said.

A CIA report made public last month stated that Iraq has imported \$10 billion worth of goods a year under the U.N. oil-for-food program. Some of the imported goods “clearly support Iraq’s military and [weapons of mass

destruction] programs,” the report stated.

“Iraq has been able to import dual-use, [weapons-of-mass-destruction]-relevant equipment and material through procurements both within and outside the U.N. sanctions regime,” the report said.

The agents in Iraq’s arsenal include the chemical nerve agents VX, sarin, cyclosarin and the blistering agent mustard.

Its biological and toxin weapons include anthrax, botulinum toxin and aflatoxin.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20021106-6179116.htm>

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Report Urges U.S. To Increase Its Efforts On Nonlethal Weapons

By William J. Broad

The American military should redouble its efforts to develop and deploy nonlethal weapons, an expert panel reported on Monday. Written before the recent hostage crisis in Moscow, the report backed drugs similar to the knockout gas used in Moscow to free hundreds of people, as well as other weapons.

The Pentagon insists it has stopped all work on incapacitating chemicals, an assertion that critics dispute. The issue is controversial because work on some chemical incapacitants can violate arms control treaties.

The new report, An Assessment of Nonlethal Weapons Science and Technology, was done at the Pentagon's request by the National Research Council, the research arm of the National Academy of Sciences. Incapacitating chemicals and other types of nonlethal arms "should be given a higher priority," it says.

The military already uses some forms of nonlethal or humane arms — tear gas, for example — in some peacekeeping operations. The report said these weapons were likely to become important in defending ships and singling out terrorists hidden among civilian populations. The terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, it said, have added urgency to the acceptance and carrying out of the report's recommendations.

The report was critical of what it called several obstacles to progress, including limited research, few new ideas and poor understanding of weapons effects. It said such problems could preclude nonlethal weapons "from becoming an integral force option."

The report was written by a panel of 17, including its chairwoman, Miriam E. John, head of the California branch of the Sandia National Laboratories, which helps maintain the nation's nuclear arsenal.

The government has, at relatively low levels of financing, explored an array of technologies that can immobilize people and machines, including loud noises, bright lights, horrific odors, electrical shocks, dense smoke, superglues, rigid foams, slippery greases, blunt projectiles and bursts of microwave radiation.

The new report said that mind-altering or sleep-inducing chemical agents, which the military calls calmatives, offered "strong potential" as weapons meant to dissuade, temporarily inhibit, incapacitate or otherwise impede dangerous crowds and individuals.

It said future research on calmatives needed to focus on quantifying their effectiveness, increasing their margin of safety and developing the means of rapidly delivering the appropriate dose. These problems, and the lack of sufficient antidotes, became large factors in the Moscow hostage crisis, where 118 people died, roughly one in seven of the 763 hostages.

The report mentioned fentanyl, the drug used in Moscow. It cited the drug as particularly fast acting, "on the order of one minute after exposure."

The report said nonlethal arms could be used to block the kind of attack that struck the American destroyer Cole in Yemen in October 2000, when suicide bombers pulled a small boat packed with explosives alongside the ship and detonated the payload. The report said nonlethal arms could be directed to try to cripple approaching threats and, if unsuccessful, could be followed up with deadly force.

The report called for new research in areas like chemicals, directed energy like microwaves, barriers and entanglements.

The development of chemical nonlethal weapons has all but stopped since the adoption of a 1997 treaty known as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the report said. Even so, the study added, "there are compelling applications in engine stopping and crowd control that cannot be achieved by others means."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/06/national/06WEAP.html>

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USA Today
November 6, 2002
Pg. 17

Troops May Get Smallpox Vaccination

Officials fear Saddam may use pathogen on U.S. forces in Iraq

By Dave Moniz, USA Today

WASHINGTON — The Pentagon, embroiled in a debate over whether Iraq — and other nations — have stockpiles of smallpox, is considering a plan to vaccinate U.S. troops against the deadly virus in the event of a war with Iraq, Defense Department officials say.

The debate is being driven by uncertainty over whether Baghdad has the pathogen and would be willing to use it against U.S. forces if war begins.

“You just don’t know if they have it or not,” said one Pentagon official, explaining that the military may have to err on the side of caution and vaccinate thousands of U.S. troops.

No decision has been made about using the vaccine.

A U.S. official said Tuesday that the CIA suspects that four countries, besides the United States — Iraq, Russia, North Korea and France — might have some quantities of smallpox.

Military and intelligence officials say the suspicions are based in part on circumstantial evidence. The CIA analysis was first reported in The Washington Post Tuesday. The CIA report was provided to a limited number of administration officials.

The Bush administration has been debating for months whether to start a smallpox vaccination program in advance of any attack on the USA.

In October, a panel of medical experts recommended that vaccination be limited to about 500,000 health care workers prior to detection of any case to create a pool of immunized medical personnel should an attack occur.

But the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, which makes vaccine recommendations to federal health agencies, did not recommend immunizing the whole country unless there is a confirmed case.

That’s because in a world where no cases of smallpox have existed since the late 1970s, the vaccine poses a greater risk than the disease. Before routine smallpox vaccination ended in the USA in 1972, about 1,000 of every 1 million people vaccinated suffered serious reactions; one or two died. The virus itself kills about 30% of those infected.

Al-Qaeda terrorists are believed to have sought smallpox as a weapon to use against the United States. Evidence found by the U.S. military during its hunt for al-Qaeda fugitives in Afghanistan suggests that Osama bin Laden sought to acquire smallpox.

Since United Nations weapons inspectors were withdrawn in 1998, little is known about Iraq’s chemical- and biological-weapons programs.

Contributing: Anita Manning, wire reports

<http://www.usatoday.com/usatoday/20021106/4595915s.htm>

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Washington Post
November 6, 2002
Pg. 3

N. Korea Hints At Missile Test

Threat Aimed at Jump-Starting Talks With Japan

By Doug Struck, Washington Post Foreign Service

TOKYO, Nov. 5 -- North Korea has warned that it may end its freeze on missile tests, raising the ante in the standoff over U.S. demands that it end its program to make fuel for a nuclear weapon.

The warning, carried by the official North Korean news agency, was directed at Japan, which is under pressure by the United States to halt recent diplomatic progress toward normalizing ties and extending economic aid to the dictatorial government.

If those negotiations stall over the nuclear issue, North Korean officials are “of the view that [North Korea] should reconsider the moratorium on missile test firings,” the Korean Central News Agency said, quoting a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

A North Korean long-range missile test in 1998 unnerved Japan and other Asian neighbors. In 1999, North Korea pledged to maintain a moratorium on missile tests in a gesture aimed at the United States, and it has repeatedly extended the freeze.

The Bush administration stopped negotiations with North Korea for two years, and announced last month that it would not engage in further talks until North Korea dismantled its program to enrich uranium. It has urged other nations to put similar pressure on Pyongyang, and talks between North Korea and Japan foundered last week, principally on the nuclear issue.

Analysts had predicted North Korea would respond by increasing threats. Some experts said they expected the government to stage a missile test or move spent reactor fuel away from international supervision to increase pressure on the United States to negotiate.

In other commentary, the Korean Central News Agency repeated the country's fear that the United States intends to invade North Korea and called again for a "non-aggression treaty" between the countries. The agency asserted that "the best way for the United States to solve the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is to sit with [North Korea] and have a frank discussion."

In Cambodia, where he is attending a meeting of Southeast Asian leaders, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan noted that his Sept. 17 summit agreement with the leader of North Korea, Kim Jong Il, included a pledge that North Korea continue the missile test moratorium after 2003, when it had been scheduled to expire. "I do not believe North Korea will trample on the fundamental spirit of our Pyongyang agreement," Koizumi said at a news conference in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh.

The prime minister said Japan will "speak firmly as we continue our negotiations," indicating Japan will keep talking with North Korea despite the U.S. preference for isolating Pyongyang.

In an interview here today, Japan's chief negotiator in the talks with North Korea, acknowledged there were limits to Japan's role in easing the confrontation. "The talks cannot resolve the issue between [North Korea] and the United States," said Katsunari Suzuki. "To resolve those issues, there have to be bilateral talks" between Washington and Pyongyang.

Suzuki also said Japan did not accept Washington's position that the 1994 Agreed Framework pact, in which Pyongyang promised to end its nuclear program and Washington promised to improve ties, had been renounced by North Korea.

Both sides have accused the other of breaking the pact.

"Neither party has said it is nullified," Suzuki insisted. "The United States certainly did not say that clearly. [North Korea] may have murmured it, but didn't say that clearly. Our position is to maintain the Agreed Framework as long as possible." He added that Japan was "strongly urging" the United States, North Korea and South Korea "that unless we find some better alternative, it's very risky for all of us to throw the Agreed Framework away."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A10432-2002Nov5.html>

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New York Times
November 6, 2002

North Korea Says It May Restart Missile Tests After Talks Fail

By Howard W. French

TOKYO, Nov. 5 — North Korea warned today that unless relations with Japan are quickly normalized it would resume its testing of ballistic missiles.

The thinly veiled threat was issued by an unidentified Foreign Ministry spokesman less than a week after the first high-level talks between the countries in two years, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ended in an angry stalemate.

The statement today said the "relevant organs" would "reconsider the moratorium on the missile test-fire in case the talks on normalizing the relations between North Korea and Japan get prolonged without making any progress, as was the case with the recent talks."

North Korea shocked this country in 1998 with a surprise test of a Taepodong intercontinental ballistic missile, which over flew Japan. North Korea said the test was a satellite launching and has refrained from testing for several years. It reaffirmed a self-imposed moratorium on missile testing six weeks ago in a meeting between North Korea's leader, Kim Jong Il, and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan.

Mr. Koizumi, who is attending a meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, today dismissed the warning, saying it did not figure in any government-to-government communication, and expressed confidence that Japan's diplomatic engagement with the North would bear fruit. "I believe North Korea will not do anything to trample the spirit of the Pyongyang declaration," he said.

During Mr. Koizumi's one-day meeting with Mr. Kim, the North Korean leader pledged not only to continue to observe its missile test moratorium, but also to abide by all international obligations regarding nuclear weapons.

The meeting seemed to put the countries on a fast track toward establishing diplomatic relations. Since the demise of the Soviet bloc, North Korea has suffered famines and increasingly severe economic hardships. In preparatory negotiations, Japan offered large financial incentives to the North to change its repressive, militaristic behavior, promising a major aid package in case of normalized relations.

Since the Sept. 17 meeting, the United States announced that North Korea had acknowledged the existence of a uranium-based nuclear weapons development program, which the United States says violates international commitments made by the North in 1994.

The principal issue separating Japan and North Korea had been North Korea's kidnapping of 13 Japanese citizens, beginning in the late 1970's, for use as language trainers in a spy program. Washington's insistence that North Korea eliminate its secret weapons program before receiving Japanese economic assistance has revived tensions. The five survivors among the 13 kidnapped Japanese, who are now visiting Japan for the first time in a quarter century, have become a political and emotional football.

Following the stalemated talks with Japan, North Korea has resumed calls to the United States to normalize relations, saying it will surrender its nuclear program if the United States will guarantee the North's security. Even as it sends out feelers like these, however, North Korea's official media continue to issue belligerent statements.

Washington's position means that if North Korea "puts down arms, it will receive sugar," the Workers' Party daily said in an editorial, adding, "This is an unbearable insult."

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Baltimore Sun
November 6, 2002

U.S. Voices Concern At Iraq, N. Korea Holding Smallpox Virus

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration expressed concern yesterday that several countries might retain the smallpox virus in violation of international rules.

The comment by State Department spokesman Richard Boucher followed the disclosure by a U.S. official that Iraq, North Korea, Russia and France probably possess hidden supplies of the deadly virus.

Al-Qaida is also believed to have sought samples of smallpox to use as a weapon, but U.S. officials don't believe the terror network is capable of mounting an attack with smallpox.

Evidence recovered in Afghanistan pointed to Osama bin Laden's interest in the disease, the U.S. official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the administration does not think it likely that al-Qaida has smallpox reserves. The administration is uncertain about Iraq, he said.

Boucher noted that World Health Organization resolutions specify that smallpox virus stocks should be restricted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta or in the Russian city of Vector.

U.S. officials worry that Iraq and North Korea could develop biological weapons with their samples, which are believed to be small amounts. There is no evidence they can use the disease as a biological weapon.

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Anniston (AL) Star
November 5, 2002
Pg. 1

Chemical Weapons Program Could See Changes

National leadership role is up for grabs

By Jason Landers, Star Staff Writer

It appears the Army is playing musical chairs with the nation's chemical weapons destruction program. Washington insiders can only speculate who will grab the program's leadership seat. The rumor mill is grinding out names such

as Maj. Gen. Claude Bolton Jr. and Undersecretary of Defense Pete Aldridge as likely candidates for replacing Mario Fiori in the job.

A presidential appointee, Fiori is assistant secretary of the Army for Installations and Environment. He became the reins-man of the chemical demilitarization program in December, 2002, after the Army shifted oversight to his department from the Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Department.

Circling winds of change may blow the program back under the control of the department of acquisitions, which Bolton heads. The Oregon Bureau of the Tri-City Herald quoted a source on Saturday as saying the change was a done deal.

“None of that, I can confirm at this point,” said an Army spokesman in the Pentagon. He said there is no talk of replacing Fiori as head of Installations and Environment, but would not confirm if the Army plans to hand the reins of the chemical demilitarization program back to the department of acquisitions.

Fiori landed oversight duties during a turbulent time in the program. Cost and time overruns were grabbing headlines and the ire of lawmakers.

Sens. Richard Shelby, R-Tuscaloosa, and Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., lambasted the program’s shortcomings and demanded change. The Army answered by giving the program to Fiori, who was a former submarine commander, government nuclear safety expert and manager of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site.

Fiori was billed as the man who could smooth over the rough spots, but under his watch more potholes have surfaced. The latest was a public-relations blunder, known as “E-mailgate.”

It involved a series of e-mails that leaked to the press. The e-mails detailed how the Army planned a public relations attack on local officials who questioned the community’s preparedness for chemical weapons incident. Fiori allegedly orchestrated the plan. His assistant who wrote the e-mails has since been reassigned.

Talk of restructuring the chemical demilitarization program began again last month, immediately following newspaper reports of the scandal. It was first mentioned in a meeting between high level Army officials and members of Alabama’s congressional delegation.

Following that meeting with Under Secretary of the Army Les Brownlee, members of Alabama’s congressional delegation said Brownlee was reviewing the current organization and considering leadership changes.

If a change is made, it would be the third time in three years that the Army has shuffled oversight of the program tasked with destroying the nation’s aging chemical weapons stockpile.

“We have not officially heard anything yet,” said Andrea Andrews, spokeswoman for Shelby.

“Under Secretary Brownlee told Shelby he would personally brief him when a decision was made,” Andrews said, hinting in the statement that a leadership change is coming. She added Brownlee has not briefed the senator on a switch yet.

Critics of the program say problems will persist as long as the program’s leadership remains entrenched in the past, defending decades-old policy decisions.

“PMCD (Program Manager for Chemical Demilitarization) couldn’t sell ice cream at a state fair,” said Craig Williams, director of the Ky.-based Chemical Weapons Working Group. The group opposes incineration as a means of destroying the chemical weapons.

Williams said the program is “hell-bent” on technology that is not only decades behind schedule, but also hopelessly over budget. He advocates neutralization, a form of chemical weapons destruction that will be used in Colorado, Indiana, Maryland and perhaps Kentucky.

From Williams’ viewpoint, incidents like “E-mailgate” show the program places image above public safety - a charge the Army has vehemently denied. He claims, “The program is fraught with a defense posture that prohibits it from achieving its objective in an open matter.”

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New York Times
November 6, 2002

U.S. Port Security Plan Irks Europeans

By Gregory Crouch

ROTTERDAM, the Netherlands, Nov. 5 — Tom Ridge, the United States homeland security director, arrived here today, hoping to shore up support for a program intended to fight terrorism. Instead, he wrestled with disclosures that the European Union was considering disciplining member countries that are taking part in the American program, fearing that it could create havoc in the shipping industry.

The European Union is concerned about two-country agreements that the Bush administration has reached with eight nations in Europe and Asia, allowing United States Customs officers to select cargo containers for the inspection of hazardous material before they are shipped to the United States.

Some of the program's elements, the Europeans fear, could put exporters at a disadvantage and increase congestion and shipping costs on the Continent, according to correspondence between European Union and United States officials.

Mr. Ridge said the container security initiative by the customs service was intended to prevent terrorists from smuggling a destructive weapon in one of the six million sea containers shipped into the United States each year. He said he was working to resolve some of the issues raised by the European officials.

The European Union is considering the possibility of beginning infringement procedures against countries that have signed on to the initiative, including the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and France, according to Mr. Ridge and union officials.

"We regret this action because these are our friends and allies," Mr. Ridge said.

Some European Union diplomats are described as annoyed that the Bush administration chose to approach individual countries to take part in the antiterrorism program instead of making it a Europe-wide effort.

"Customs policy in Europe," Jonathan Todd, a union spokesman, said, "is coordinated by the European Commission."

Mr. Ridge said the Bush administration negotiated agreements with individual countries because this was more expedient. He recalled a conversation with Clifford M. Sobel, the United States ambassador to the Netherlands.

"I've got the port, I've got the government, give me a day or two and we'll make it happen," Mr. Ridge quoted Mr. Sobel as having said, adding that it took a bit longer than that to reach an agreement with Dutch officials.

The Bush administration says the container initiative is a top priority because a nuclear or chemical attack originating in a cargo container could paralyze global shipping, possibly even crippling the world economy for a time.

"This is an issue of national security," a United States Customs spokesman, Dennis Murphy, said. "Our objective is to get this done as quickly as we possibly can. We don't have the luxury of time here."

Rotterdam is the first city to play host to United States Customs officers. Four are currently working alongside Dutch inspectors, developing risk profiles and screening procedures to turn up possible shipments of radioactive substances, biological agents or chemical weapons.

The inspectors sometimes use a large X-ray device to examine the interior of a container without having to open it. Since the customs officers arrived in September, Mr. Ridge acknowledged, they had yet to find anything.

European Union officials are concerned that the program's incentives favor those ports that sign the agreements and penalize those that either refuse or are too small to take part. For instance, once a cargo container has cleared United States and Dutch inspections in Rotterdam, it is more than likely to have a quicker ride through customs in the United States. But cargo leaving a French port like Marseille, which is not a party to such agreements, can expect to face potential delays when it reaches American shores.

A result, some European officials say, is that companies shipping goods to the United States will start rerouting their cargo to ports like Rotterdam, depriving others of business and potentially creating bottlenecks in some shipping regions.

Customs officials indicated that another European country had agreed in principle to sign the initiative. An announcement could come as early as this week.

A Dutch customs official said his country realized that the United States agreement was not just a way to prevent terrorist attacks. "It's good for business," she said.

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Long Island Newsday

November 5, 2002

More Worries About Bio-Attack Protection

Analysts say equipment still leaves U.S. troops vulnerable

By Craig Gordon, Washington Bureau

Washington - Preparing to face chemical and biological weapons for the first time in 85 years, U.S. troops sent into Iraq will carry equipment that leaves them vulnerable to an attack.

Facing this risk, the Pentagon has come under fire for making slow or insufficient progress in protecting its troops against gas and germs, despite advances in protective gear and detectors since Desert Storm. Congressional analysts, outside experts and defense planners and even some Pentagon officials have pointed to these problems:

Biological weapons detectors don't register an attack until about a half-hour after exposure, meaning soldiers would first know they were being attacked with anthrax or botulinum toxin only after the fact. Chemical weapons detectors are more advanced, warning of dangers as far as three miles off.

But even chemical detectors don't pick up common but deadly compounds, such as chlorine gas, used by the Germans in World War I. Also, these units easily can be fooled by putting an innocuous chemical coating on the deadly agents.

Half of 20,000 gas masks tested at random during a 1999 study were found to have "critical defects" that could render them useless in an attack.

U.S. troops now have cooler protective suits than during Desert Storm. But some outside experts charge that the Pentagon underestimates how difficult it is to fight while wearing the gear, with some saying soldiers could be at 25 percent to 50 percent of normal effectiveness in Iraq's searing heat.

The new suits' carbon-based liner begins to degrade when exposed to something expected to be a significant factor in the Iraqi desert - sweat. U.S. officials acknowledge the problem but say the suits can be replaced on the battlefield before they lose their protective ability.

Rep. Joe Baca (D-Calif.) voted against the war resolution on Iraq after coming out of a Pentagon briefing believing that U.S. soldiers aren't well-prepared to face biological weapons. "Would you send someone," Baca said, "knowing they're going to be killed?"

Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.), who has chaired hearings on chem-bio warfare, questions whether top Pentagon leaders, all the way up to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, have put enough emphasis on preparing troops to face some of the world's most horrific weapons.

"I'm certain that some units are very prepared ... but if we have to have a large number of personnel there, then I would be very concerned about whether they would have the equipment they need to do the job," Shays said.

War planners worry that U.S. troops are more likely to face Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's most horrific weapons this time because the United States has served notice that Hussein's days are numbered in the face of an American onslaught. Iraq didn't use mass-destruction weapons during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

In the realm of battlefield hazards, biological weapons are the most insidious. Chemical weapons such as sarin or mustard gas kill quickly but their deadly effects can fade quickly in combat. Biological weapons can take days to show themselves, with some, like smallpox, killing slowly and passing easily from person to person.

Many experts believe U.S. troops could fight through a chemical attack but fear that a bio-attack would be crippling. "We are highly vulnerable to even small-scale biological attacks," said retired Air Force Col. Randy Larsen, former head of military strategy at the National War College, a military school for commanders and civilian leaders.

For Maj. Gen. John Doesburg, commander of the U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command, bio-weapons are "what keeps me awake at night. ... You can't see them, you can't touch them, you can't smell them."

What Pentagon planners fear most is a weapons of mass destruction attack against massed U.S. troops, perhaps one that could shut down a port or an airfield, a strategy Hussein used effectively in the Iran-Iraq war.

Still, Doesburg and other top officials strongly dispute assertions that U.S. troops are being sent into battle without adequate protections, or that the Pentagon hasn't pushed hard enough to make strides ahead of a possible Iraqi invasion.

"The department has made significant improvements from the decade since Desert Storm," said Anna Johnson-Winegar, who oversees the Pentagon's chem-bio defense programs. "Do I believe everything is perfect? Of course not. But do I believe everything is better than it was? Absolutely yes."

During the Persian Gulf War, biological detection machines didn't exist. Chemical detectors were prone to frequent false alarms. The standard chemical suit was so cumbersome as to be all but impossible to use.

Today, the Pentagon is fielding 22 new systems developed in the past 12 years, including 10 new detectors. Troops facing a chemical weapons attack today would be given ample warning to don protective gear. About 500,000 troops are expected to be vaccinated against smallpox.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon hopes to prevent Hussein from using the weapons by persuading his generals to disobey orders - or face war-crimes charges. Knocking out Scud missile launchers and weapons plants will be an early priority in any invasion.

But the tricky science of detecting a biological attack remains elusive because detectors aren't sophisticated enough to distinguish between a bio-weapons cloud over the horizon, and one of a harmless natural substance like pollen, Doesburg said.

The Pentagon is working on a smaller and easier-to-operate bio-detector but none have been given to troops. The Pentagon had hoped to buy 143 units last year but obtained only five, according to a Pentagon report, and now is seeking proposals from manufacturers to build several hundred.

Gas mask problems uncovered in 1999 resulted from poor upkeep as well as manufacturing defects. Army officials dispute the findings, saying all but about 10 percent of problems were easily correctable through better maintenance. The new chemical suit is cooler and more durable than one used during Desert Storm, but special forces soldiers have raised the concern that sweat and seawater can degrade the suits and ultimately weaken their effectiveness against an attack.

Army Brig. Gen. Stephen Reeves, program executive for chemical and biological defense, acknowledged that sweat degrades the carbon liners in current suits but said the Pentagon took that into account when setting its 45-day life cycle, meaning the suits are expected to stand up to sweat and remain effective that long.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon still can't account for 250,000 older-model suits known to be defective, though they were recalled in 2000. U.S. officials say they are confident no front-line troops have the suits but can't say for certain what has happened to them.

Pentagon officials declined to give a specific estimate of how much a soldier's skills are degraded while wearing the suits and masks, though studies show the mask can reduce a soldier's aiming ability by 20 percent.

Jack Sawicki, technical director of homeland security for Versar-Geomet, a Virginia-based firm that develops and tests personal protective equipment, believes a soldier's effectiveness can be reduced as much as 50 percent to 75 percent by heat stress, difficulty breathing through a gas mask, reduced field of vision and other hindrances from the suits. That's what makes fighting in the suits so dangerous, particularly in the type of urban environment U.S. soldiers could face in a fight to take Baghdad, Sawicki said.

"Once you start sweating, your mask tends to fog up a little bit, you can't see very well, you've got a lot of stuff ... and then you start thinking about doing that for eight, 10, 12, 18, 24 hours," Sawicki said. "You start doing that day after day, and it becomes just a tremendous problem."

Shielding the Troops

In event of a war against Iraq, U.S. soldiers will have the equipment to protect themselves from biological and chemical attacks. However, even the most sophisticated gadgetry is not foolproof.

PROTECTIVE WEAR

+ What It Does: Shields face, body and lungs from chemical, biological and radiological hazards

-What It Can't Do: Maintain protective ability when suit is exposed to sweat

OTHER EQUIPMENT

M93A1 recon vehicle

+What It Does: Amphibious and can detect wide array of nerve and blister agents as far as three miles away

-What It Can't Do: Identify common hazardous chemicals such as chlorine gas, used by Germans in World War I

Biologically Integrated Detection System

+What It Does: Identify about 10 biological agents within a half-hour, which U.S. officials say is enough time to give treatment

-What It Can't Do: Detect contamination until exposure has occurred

M40/M42 mask

Silicone face piece and butyl underlayer resists biohazards; accommodates drinking tube during long periods of use
NATO filter canister

Hazard suit

Can be worn as overgarment or primary uniform; has 45-day life cycle

SOURCE: Defense Department; Military Analysis Network; staff reporting

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2002/11/06/MN196839.DTL>

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Baltimore Sun

November 7, 2002

U.S. Ready To Vaccinate Troops Against Smallpox

Pentagon awaits go-ahead from the White House

By Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Pentagon has completed its plan for vaccinating U.S. troops against smallpox, and is awaiting White House approval before giving the first shots, a senior defense official said yesterday. With the looming possibility of war in Iraq, the Pentagon is pushing to provide every available form of protection for troops who might be exposed to germ weapons. U.S. officials said this week that they believe Iraq is among four nations that have unauthorized samples of smallpox; the others are Russia, North Korea and France. Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld has not yet given the go-ahead to implement the smallpox inoculation plan, according to the defense official who discussed it on condition of anonymity. Rumsfeld and other members of President Bush's national security team were to discuss it at a White House meeting today, the official said. The Department of Health and Human Services has set aside about 1 million doses of smallpox vaccine for the military. The doses are expected to be provided from the 1.7 million that have been licensed by the Food and Drug Administration.

The federal government has tens of millions more doses on hand, but they have not yet been licensed and would have to be administered as an experimental drug.

Hundreds of thousands of U.S. troops have received vaccines to protect them against anthrax, and after a long pause in that inoculation program, the pace of vaccinations was accelerated in September, officials said. It is believed that Iraq has substantial amounts of anthrax that it could use against invading U.S. troops.

Smallpox vaccinations for troops could begin this month, officials said, depending on the pace of coordination with the White House and other government agencies.

First to receive it would be those the Pentagon calls "first responders" - troops responsible for assisting in domestic disasters, such as a bioweapons attack. They include medical specialists. Next to get it probably would be troops in combat units designated to deploy first in a major military crisis abroad, such as an invasion of Iraq.

As many as 500,000 troops might eventually be inoculated, according to another senior defense official. Of the 1.4 million men and women in the active-duty military, fewer than half have ever received the smallpox vaccine, the official said.

For the civilian population, top federal health officials have recommended making the vaccine available in stages, beginning with people who work in hospital emergency rooms; then other health care workers and emergency responders; and finally the general public.

The White House is still considering how quickly to move - specifically, whether to wait until the vaccine is licensed or to offer it more quickly.

Smallpox was declared eradicated from Earth in 1980, and routine vaccinations in the United States ended in 1972. All stocks of the virus, except those stored at official labs in Atlanta and Moscow, were supposed to have been destroyed.

The virus is a powerful weapon: It kills 30 percent of its victims, is highly contagious and has no known treatment. But while the disease is frightening, so is the vaccine. It's made with a live virus called vaccinia that can cause serious damage to people vaccinated and those with whom they come into close contact. Health officials estimate that about 15 out of every million people being vaccinated will face life-threatening side effects, and one or two of those 15 will die.

<http://www.sunspot.net/news/printedition/bal-te.smallpox07nov07.story>

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(11-06) 08:22 PST PARIS (AP) --

France denies having hidden smallpox stocks

By Associated Press

PARIS – France said Wednesday that it does not have any samples of the smallpox virus, strongly denying U.S. assertions that it has retained supplies in violation of international rules.

Smallpox has plagued humans for centuries and is thought to have killed more people than all wars and epidemics combined.

After a massive worldwide effort, the disease was declared eradicated in 1980, with authorized samples of the virus retained for future research only in Russia and the United States.

However, U.S. intelligence officials said Tuesday that they believe that four nations have hidden unauthorized samples of the deadly virus – Russia, Iraq, North Korea and France.

French Foreign Ministry spokesman Bernard Valero strongly denied the assertion.

“France scrupulously respects its international engagements,” Mr. Valero said. “Therefore, France does not possess any stocks of smallpox in its laboratories, either civilian or military.”

U.S. officials said they believe that France has small amounts of the virus for use in programs aimed at researching and mounting a defense to an outbreak of the disease.

Mr. Valero said France has limited its smallpox research to the search for a new-generation vaccine. Researchers have used only “authorized animal samples, which are not dangerous to man,” he said.

The Bush administration is concerned that Iraq and North Korea could develop potent biological weapons with their samples, which are believed to exist in small amounts. Officials also fear that lax security in Russia could allow other nations to obtain the deadly disease for use as a weapon.

Russia is thought to have a great deal more smallpox in its stockpiles than the small amount allowed for them under international agreements, according to the officials.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/11/06/international1122EST0810.DTL>

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California Doctor's Suicide Leaves Many Troubling Mysteries

Unsolved

By JO THOMAS

IRVINE, Calif. — On the morning of Feb. 28, 2000, a man in a black hood ran up to Patrick Riley in front of his office, shot him flush in the face and fled.

The bullet missed his brain, and Mr. Riley, a biotechnology entrepreneur, survived. But two days later, his business partner, a doctor named Larry C. Ford, killed himself with a shotgun after learning he was suspected of being the mastermind behind the shooting.

That is where the story probably would have ended — a lurid but ultimately local piece of intrigue played out in the sun-splashed Orange County sprawl — had it not been for the phone calls that within hours began coming in to the police. Dr. Ford, the callers said, had left something behind: a cache of weapons and anthrax.

The local elementary school was closed. Forty-two families were evacuated from their homes in Dr. Ford's affluent neighborhood. Then police and federal investigators began to unearth evidence that Larry Ford had another life — that he was not just a brilliant, if somewhat geeky, gynecologist who hoped to develop a device to protect women from AIDS.

Buried next to his swimming pool they found canisters containing machine guns and C-4 plastic explosives. In refrigerators at his home and office, next to the salad dressing and employee lunches, were 266 bottles and vials of pathogens — among them salmonella, cholera, botulism and typhoid. The deadly poison ricin was stored, with a blowgun and darts, in a plastic bag in the family room. A compartment under the floorboards held medical files on 83 women.

What the searchers did not find was anthrax, and the fear of what remained unfound, along with dozens of other questions, set off investigations that ranged from Beverly Hills to South Africa and back to the Nevada desert. Since then, pieces of Dr. Ford's other life have begun to emerge. Taken together, they form a troubling and confusing picture — of a man with ties to racist, antigovernment groups in the United States who also developed a relationship with apartheid South Africa's secret biological and chemical weapons program, Project Coast. For the most part, though, investigators say they are stymied, a long way from understanding what Dr. Ford was doing with his guns and his germs. In South Africa, documents from Project Coast were either destroyed or classified and put on CD-ROM's in a military vault. The fragments of Larry Ford's other life remain just that — frightening, tantalizing fragments.

Still, while no one is suggesting any link to the anthrax attacks of last fall, the questions Dr. Ford left behind nag deeper now, in the ambient anxiety of the post-Sept. 11 world.

Around Irvine, most people knew the 49-year-old Dr. Ford as a committed Mormon and a family man of harmless eccentricities, like wearing tennis shoes no matter what the occasion.

Trained as a gynecologist and microbiologist, he taught at the University of California at Los Angeles in the 1980's and later at the university's campus here. He wrote dozens of scholarly articles on infectious diseases and, with Mr. Riley, ran a biotechnology company, Biofem Inc.

After his suicide, officials began to wonder if Dr. Ford might have deliberately infected some patients. There were the hidden medical records, and a number of women had come forward to say they feared Dr. Ford was responsible for their mysterious illnesses. But in interviews, several former patients praised Dr. Ford and said they felt fine.

Epidemiologists examined the records and interviewed eight women, six of them ill. But they quickly closed the inquiry, saying they had found no public health threat and no pattern of symptoms suggesting deliberate infection. One of the women, Shane Gregory, says she was a 27-year-old U.C.L.A. undergraduate when Dr. Ford became infatuated with her in 1981, buying her a car and renting her an apartment. She says she broke off the relationship in 1984 — and believes that was the same year Dr. Ford deliberately infected her, possibly in Los Angeles and possibly in London.

In October 1987, she says, she developed vertigo, and "that's when my life changed." Despite brain surgery and medicine, she says, "I never got better."

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According to a law enforcement official, Dr. Ford told two friends that he had infected Ms. Gregory with an "alpha toxin." The official said the authorities had recently received information that appeared to corroborate this.

Then there were the suggestions that Dr. Ford was working for the C.I.A. Several people close to him — including Dr. Hunter Hammill, a Baylor University professor who collaborated on papers with him — say he sometimes told them so. Other people say they simply assumed it.

"We had heard that he had worked for the government, worked at Fort Detrick," said Dr. Daniel Knobel, a senior official in Project Coast. He was referring to the Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases in Frederick, Md., where the government did biological weapons research.

Lt. Col. Kathleen W. Carr, the institute's deputy commander for operations, said there was no record of Dr. Ford's having worked there. In addition, a scientist who was a leading C.I.A. expert on biological warfare during this time said he had never heard of him.

Indeed, Dr. Ford's only known connection to Fort Detrick is an unclassified 1988 newcomer's guide found among his belongings.

But the Irvine police have their suspicions. Detective Victor Ray said that before the search of the Ford property, he warned the F.B.I. agent in charge about reports that Dr. Ford had developed germs and toxins for the C.I.A.

Detective Ray said that after three calls to bureau headquarters, the agent, Doug Baker, responded that Dr. Ford had worked for the C.I.A. and might have buried just about anything. Mr. Baker, speaking through an F.B.I. spokesman, denied this.

One thing that is clear is that Dr. Ford was involved with the apartheid government of South Africa. Just what he was doing, though, is far less clear.

After his death, Detective Ray said, the authorities learned that Dr. Ford had been a consultant to Project Coast, which has been accused of creating weapons for use against enemies of apartheid. They also discovered that he had held extreme racist views and had once told a girlfriend that to understand him, she should read "The Turner Diaries," the anti-Semitic and white supremacist novel, popular among far-right groups, that was prosecutors say inspired the Oklahoma City bombing.

Over the years, Dr. Ford made a number of trips to South Africa. His laboratory assistant and constant companion, Valerie Kesler, says she traveled there with him at least six times.

Speaking through her lawyer, Ms. Kesler said that Dr. Ford had once carried a vial in his vest pocket and handed it to a South African official at the airport. Dr. Ford, she remembered, was extremely nervous throughout the flight. Years later, she said, she realized that the vial held lethal bacteria, endangering everyone on the plane.

Dr. Wouter Basson, the cardiologist who ran Project Coast, said Dr. Ford twice brought biological samples "in his pocket." They were not dangerous, he said, and "had no military significance."

After the fall of apartheid, South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission conducted an extensive investigation of Project Coast. In 1998, Project Coast scientists told the commission that they had produced, among other weapons, chocolates and cigarettes infected with anthrax, milk laced with botulism, and enough cholera to cause "massive outbreaks."

In a 30-month nonjury trial, the judge, an apartheid-era holdover, dropped six murder charges against Dr. Basson, on the ground that the killings had occurred outside the country. Last spring, Dr. Basson was acquitted of all other charges, including murder conspiracy and drug trafficking.

In a recent interview in South Africa, Dr. Basson said he had invited Dr. Ford to lecture Project Coast scientists in 1987 because the program's Dr. Knobel had described Dr. Ford as an expert on chemical and biological weapons.

"Nothing he could offer was what we could use," Dr. Basson said.

Asked why Dr. Ford was later paid through the project's Swiss bank account, Dr. Basson said Dr. Knobel had told him to arrange payments for Dr. Ford's AIDS research. Both officials said they had tried to help Dr. Ford find a South African laboratory for AIDS research.

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Ultimately, he was given space in an aerospace medicine laboratory to work on several projects using amniotic fluid collected from thousands of women in South African military hospitals. Why these projects were sponsored by the military, and what became of them, is unclear.

However, a South African military document about AIDS research, found in Dr. Basson's possession by investigators, mentioned "the acquisition of any relevant C.B.W. literature from Dr. Ford." The abbreviation C.B.W. is commonly used to refer to chemical and biological weapons.

Perhaps the deepest fear in the entire affair was that Dr. Ford had been working with anthrax. That trail, too, has run cold.

After Dr. Ford's suicide, the police got tips that he had buried anthrax in a gold mine. They searched fruitlessly in California. Four months later, documents in a Nevada trash dump showed that Dr. Ford had been in touch with people involved in antitax and antigovernment groups. Some of them had tried to use bacteria to extract gold from dirt.

In December 2000, investigators searched a derelict gold milling site outside Henderson, Nev. They found a separator funnel, a white liquid and Dr. Ford's business card. A federal agent said they also found directions for making chemical and biological weapons, including anthrax. But that was all. The site's proprietor had recently died of unrelated causes.

As for the attempted murder case, the gunman remains unknown. The getaway driver, an accountant and friend of Dr. Ford's named Dino D'Saachs, was sentenced to 26 years to life after refusing to identify the shooter in return for leniency.

Mr. Riley, who has recovered but for a faint scar, says he never suspected Dr. Ford. He has rebuilt the company the two of them ran, and he has made a settlement with Dr. Ford's wife, Diane. She has refused requests for interviews. Even the doctor's suicide notes, scratched out while he was conferring with his lawyer on the last day of his life, offered no clues.

Dr. Ford promised to meet his wife and three children in heaven. "I was set up by evil," he wrote. "Fear not. I will be with you forever."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/03/national/03DOCT.html?pagewanted=1>

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