



September 2004 – No. 38B

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BERICHTEN BUITENLAND

Jerusalem Post

Report: Israel's 'first strike' plan against Iran ready

By Douglas Davis – 18 July 2004

Israel has completed military rehearsals for a pre-emptive strike against Iran's nuclear power facility at Bushehr, Israeli officials told the London-based Sunday Times.

Such a strike is likely if Russia supplies Iran with fuel rods for enriching uranium. The rods, currently stored at a Russian port, are expected to be delivered late next year after a dispute over financial terms is resolved.

An Israeli defense source in Tel Aviv, who confirmed that the military rehearsals had taken place, told the paper: "Israel will on no account permit Iranian reactors - especially the one being built in Bushehr with Russian help - to go critical."

The source was also quoted as saying that any strike on the Gulf coast facility at Bushehr would probably be carried out by long-range F-15I jets, overflying Turkey, with simultaneous operations by commandos on the ground.

"If the worst comes to the worst and international efforts fail," the source was quoted as saying, "we are very confident we'll be able to demolish the ayatollahs' nuclear aspirations in one go."

The source noted that the strike could be accompanied by an attack on other targets, including a facility at Natanz, where the Iranians have attempted to enrich uranium, and a plant at Arak, which produces heavy water.

In addition, the paper quoted a senior United States official warning of a pre-emptive Israeli strike if Russia continues cooperating with the Iranians. The Israeli source said Washington was unlikely to block Israeli military action.

The paper also quoted from a classified document on the Iranian threat which was presented to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon earlier this year and which it claims to have seen.

The document, entitled "The Strategic Future of Israel," was reportedly written by four of Israel's senior defense experts and advocated military action against "countries which develop nuclear weapons."

It described Iran as a "suicide nation" and recommended "targeted killings" of members of the country's elite, including its leading nuclear scientists.

Under an Iranian deal with Moscow, waste produced at Bushehr containing plutonium that could be used in bomb-making would be shipped back to Russia for storage.

The procedure is to be supervised by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear watchdog.

But according to the paper, the material must first cool, providing the Iran with what Washington fears could be up to two years in which to extract the plutonium.

The paper quotes Israeli sources as saying that a quarter of a ton of plutonium could be produced each a year if Bushehr is fully functional, enough for 20 bombs.

Israeli sources acknowledged, added the Sunday Times, that a pre-emptive strike against Iranian nuclear facilities could provoke "a ferocious response," which could involve Lebanese-based rocket attacks on northern Israel or terrorist attacks against Jewish and Israeli targets abroad.

In a related development, London's Sunday Telegraph reported that America's bipartisan 9/11 Commission will this week report that Iran gave free passage to up to 10 of the September 11 hijackers just months before the 2001 attacks and offered to co-operate with al-Qaida against the US.

The commission, established by Congress in 2002, will also state that Iran, not Iraq, fostered relations with the al-Qaida network in the years leading up to the 2001 attacks on America.

The commission has established that between eight and 10 of the September 11 hijackers, who had been based in Afghanistan, traveled through Iran between October 2000 and February 2001. They are believed to have been the "muscle," whose mission was to storm the aircraft cockpits and overpower crew and passengers.

The commission will also report that Iranian officials were instructed not to harass al-Qaida personnel as they crossed the border and, in some cases, not to stamp their passports.

Testimony received by the commission - based on information from prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and about 100 electronic intercepts by the National Security Agency - indicates that an alliance was established between the Shia Muslim Iranian leadership and the Sunni terrorist al-Qaida organization in advance of the September 11 attacks.

Former U.S. Officials Oppose Israel Attack on Iran

19 July 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An Israeli military strike likely would not solve the problem of Iran's nuclear program and would harm U.S. national interests, two former senior U.S. officials said on Monday.

Growing concern about advances in Iran's nuclear capabilities has fanned speculation that Israel could act to wipe out key Iranian facilities, as it did against Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981.

But former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and former CIA Director Robert Gates, co-authors of a new study on Iran, said it was unlikely such a strike would be effective and it would damage U.S. interests.

They spoke at a news conference to discuss a new Council on Foreign Relations report which urges the United States to begin a selective engagement with Iran and argues the lack of sustained contacts hurts U.S. interests.

Unlike Osirak, which was a single reactor, Iran has a number of nuclear-related facilities dispersed around the country, making it harder to target key sites, Gates said.

Moreover, the Osirak reactor was relatively isolated, while Iran's facilities are in or near cities, increasing the chances of civilian casualties, he said.

To carry out such a strike, Israel would almost certainly have to fly over airspace controlled by the United States, meaning America could be judged complicit with the Israeli action, Brzezinski said.

He added that military action would harm prospects for political change in Iran by galvanizing nationalistic fervor and this could damage U.S. interests, especially in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Iran has admitted that for 18 years it has secretly been developing nuclear-related capabilities but it denies U.S. charges that these are part of nuclear arms program.

Al Iraqiya TV

Interview with Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage

Baghdad – 19 July 2004

[...]

QUESTION: Most major news networks have forecasted that the terrorists involved in the 9/11 attacks committed their operations from Iran. Do you see the Iranian government having a hand in the 9/11 attacks?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I have to look at the Commission report. I've seen press reports of the report that said the Iranians were involved in some of the facilitation of this, and we'll let the evidence take its way. If that's the case, then our view is to rapidly try to make amends by expelling the Al Qaeda that supposedly are in Iran. The Iranian government knows that they would be very well advised, I think, to return those people to their countries of origin so all of us can learn what they know.

[...]

United Press International

Iraq accuses Iran of infiltration

20 July 2004

Beirut, Lebanon, Jul. 20 (UPI) -- Defense Minister Hazem Shaalan accused Iranian intelligence of infiltrating Iraq, threatening to export terrorism to Iraq's neighboring countries.

"The Iranian infiltration is wide and unprecedented since the founding of the Iraqi state," Shaalan said Tuesday in a telephone interview with the Saudi daily al-Sharq al-Awsat, monitored in Beirut.

"The Iranians infiltrated the various departments of the state in general and have set up intelligence and security centers in several Iraqi cities."

He warned Iraq could respond to the terrorist attacks that claimed scores of Iraqi lives by exporting terrorism to the countries supporting and financing terrorism in Iraq.

Shallan said Iraqi authorities have arrested 35 terror suspects in Baghdad recently, including remnants of the ousted Baath regime and Muslim extremists.

Shaanan said Iraq has an estimated 40,000 national guardsmen who are not part of the regular army and who will be in charge of restoring security to the war-torn country with the assistance of U.S.-led multinational forces.

Reuters

Fear of nuclear Iran could influence U.S. diplomacy

by Carol Giacomo – 21 July 2004

WASHINGTON, July 21 (Reuters) - A revived debate in Washington over possible diplomatic engagement with Iran has been fueled by the growing fear that Tehran is determined to become a nuclear power and time is running out to stop it.

A quarter of a century of U.S. hostility and sanctions have not deterred Iran's nuclear ambitions and what Washington calls its support for terrorism.

A growing chorus of American experts says a fresh approach -- sustained dialogue coupled with carrots and sticks -- must be tried. But they acknowledge this is a long shot.

The intense antagonism that has existed since militant students held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days during the 1979 Iranian revolution "could become a collision course," former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski said this week.

"But perhaps there are the makings of somewhat ameliorating the relationship between the two sides," he said.

With anti-Western clerics dominant in its roiling politics, Iran has shown little interest in making nice with Washington.

Many experts believe even if Tehran's hard-line leaders are replaced, it may have no impact on the quest for a nuclear bomb because a broad spectrum of Iranians endorse that goal.

Ray Takeyh of the National Defense University said it was apparent only in retrospect that China made the decision to go nuclear in 1955, a decade before testing a bomb.

"I don't know if Iran has crossed the point of no return. I suspect they are awfully close to it and they may have crossed it," he told the liberal Center for American Progress think tank. "Time is not on our side." For two years, the Bush administration has accused Iran of developing nuclear weapons and some U.S. experts predict Tehran could have a bomb by the end of 2005.

But Washington was wrong about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and its credibility is now more suspect.

CRITICAL MOMENT

So far, no one has found a "smoking gun" that proves Iran is lying when it says its nuclear program is only aimed at peaceful energy needs.

But Tehran concealed many nuclear activities for 18 years and now admits it is developing the capability to enrich uranium, a key method of producing weapons-grade fuel.

"Once enrichment capability exists a major barrier to producing a nuclear weapon virtually vanishes. ... We are at a critical moment," former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft wrote recently in the Washington Post.

Scowcroft, who advised President George W. Bush's father, has long advocated dialogue to reach out to the predominantly young population that is the future of Iran, a key oil-producing power in the Middle East. Presumptive Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry is willing to try this.

Bush, whose administration had 18 months of quiet contacts with Tehran before shutting them off in 2003, has shown little interest in new overtures and some predict he will intensify support for Iranian dissidents if re-elected.

This week a task force chaired by Brzezinski and former CIA Director Robert Gates organized by the Council on Foreign Relations added new urgency to the need for dialogue.

They said the lack of sustained contact with Iran is harming U.S. interests in the post-Sept 11, 2001 environment and urged a shift to "cautious, selected ... national-interest oriented engagement."

"Right now, we have no influence on the outcome of issues that are of real importance to our security interests in that region," including Iran's nuclear ambitions, terrorism policy and involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, which could make or break stability in both those countries, Gates said.

Iranian WMD program delayed by international vigilance

Annual Military Intelligence report to Foreign Affairs and Defense committee sees Iran as prime threat facing Israel, estimates Iranian N-bomb 3-4 years away

21 July 2004

The Israeli Intelligence community credits the increased IAEA surveillance of Iran's covert nuclear development program with having succeeded in delaying its maturation by about 2-3 years.

Until recently Israel believed Iran would be ready to fabricate its first nuclear weapon in 2005. This has been revised to 2007, perhaps even 2008.

In its annual "National Estimate of the Situation" report, IDF Military Intelligence (Aman) stated that Iran is rapidly emerging as the most significant existential threat facing Israel.

According to the report, the danger posed by Iran is a combination of both its regime and capabilities. Regarding the former, things have taken a turn for the worse, following the recent successes of the hard line reactionaries in totally ousting the reformist elements from all positions of power. Iran is now totally in the hands of a regime with a pathological hatred of Israel, a proven track record and penchant for sponsoring terrorism, and a determination to possess nuclear weapons and the means to launch them.

The one positive development is the fact that the Iranian timetable seems to have been postponed by two – three years. This is considered a direct result of the increased international pressure on, and surveillance of Tehran's nuclear development program.

Information and estimates regarding the delays that have impacted Iran's nuclear ambitions were reportedly part of the talks IAEA head Elbareidi recently held in Israel.

International concern and scrutiny of Iran's nuclear ambitions and capabilities grew following the disclosures of nuclear peddling by Pakistani nuclear weapons expert Abdul Qadeer Khan. Shortly after this affair became public, Iran admitted it had purchased centrifuges used to enrich uranium via Khan's nuclear black market.

Since then the EU has joined the US in demanding Iran accept unlimited IAEA monitoring of its nuclear facilities, enabling the UN agency to get tough with the Ayatollahs of Teheran.

Reuters

NKorea, Iran May Harbor New Threat -- Task Force

By Jim Wolf – 22 July 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - North Korea and Iran may be seeking the ability to attack the United States by triggering a nuclear device at high altitude to disrupt vital computer networks, a congressionally mandated task force reported on Thursday.

Looking out 15 years, the panel said the detonation of a nuclear device above the United States "has the potential to hold our society at risk and might result in defeat of our military forces."

U.S. forces are increasingly dependent on digital networks for finding, tracking and killing their foes.

The task force was chartered by the Republican-controlled Congress to assess the threat from a weapons-generated "electromagnetic pulse," or EMP, that could fry electronics and disrupt financial and other networks.

"Rogue states, such as North Korea and Iran, may also be developing the capability to pose an EMP threat," said the Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse Attack.

The nine-member commission did not specify in publicly available material the source of its information on North Korea and Iran, which President Bush grouped with prewar Iraq in what he called an "axis of evil."

Russia and China had "considered" limited nuclear attack options that, unlike their Cold War plans, involve EMP as their primary or sole weapon, it said.

"The U.S. must establish a global environment that will profoundly discourage such attacks," the report said. It also must develop the capability to "fail as gracefully as possible" if financial and other networks were knocked out.

The Pentagon had no immediate comment.

Seven members of the commission were appointed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, with the others named by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The findings were unanimous.

It was headed by William Graham, a science adviser to the late president Ronald Reagan and member of two congressionally chartered panels -- on ballistic missiles and space -- that Rumsfeld led before Bush took office in 2001.

The report's executive summary was made public at a hearing of the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee. A detailed assessment of potential threats was classified.

Pakistan Daily Times

Iran warns EU against 'double standards' over nuclear issue

23 July 2004

TEHRAN: Iran warned the European Union on Thursday to refrain from using "double standards" in its dealings with the Islamic republic over its nuclear activities, the official news agency IRNA reported. Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi accused the EU of failing to live up to undertakings in a landmark deal with Iran in October which saw Tehran agree to cooperate with the UN nuclear watchdog the International Atomic Energy Agency. But Iran has accused the Europeans of damaging the deal by sponsoring a critical resolution adopted last month by the IAEA, which deplored a lack of cooperation by Tehran. "If the EU is interested in extensive relations with the Islamic republic of Iran as a key player in the establishment of peace and security in the region, it should refrain from double standards and stand firmly committed to its undertakings," Kharazi said after holding talks in Cairo with EU foreign policy envoy Javier Solana.

Washington Times

CIA points to continuing Iran tie to al Qaeda

By Bill Gertz – 23 July 2004

A senior CIA official has revealed that al Qaeda operatives in Iran probably had advance knowledge of recent terrorist attacks, a sign that the cooperation between Tehran and al Qaeda is continuing since September 11.

"There have been al Qaeda people who have stayed for some time in Iran ... and because they have been in touch with colleagues outside of Iran at times when operations have occurred, it's hard to imagine that they were unwitting of those operations," the senior official said.

"And it's not hard to make the leap that they may have had at least some operational knowledge. It's harder to make the leap that they were directing operations like that."

The senior official spoke to reporters on the findings of the September 11 commission. The commission's report provides new details of Iranian government support for al Qaeda, including travel assistance to several of the hijackers involved in the 2001 airline attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

U.S. intelligence officials have said that a senior al Qaeda operations official, Sayf al-Adl, has been in Iran since 2002. He has been linked to the terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia in May, and to the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa.

The commission inquiry revealed that captured al Qaeda leaders Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and Ramzi Binalshibh disclosed to interrogators that at least eight of the September 11 hijackers "transited Iran" on the way to Afghanistan, "taking advantage of the Iranian practice of not stamping Saudi passports," the nearly 600-page report stated.

Both terrorists said that ease of travel was the only reason the hijackers went to Iran and they denied any ties between al Qaeda and Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed terrorist group.

"In sum, there is strong evidence that Iran facilitated the transit of al Qaeda members into and out of Afghanistan before 9/11, and that some of these were future 9/11 hijackers," the report said.

The report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States also said senior Hezbollah terrorists knew about the al Qaeda members' travels to Iran.

The report said no evidence was found that Iran or Hezbollah were aware of the planning of the September 11 attacks.

"At the time of their travel through Iran, the al Qaeda operatives themselves were probably not aware of the specific details of their future operation," the report said. "After 9/11, Iran and Hezbollah wished to conceal any past evidence of cooperation with Sunni terrorists associated with al Qaeda."

The commission concluded that "we believe this topic requires further investigation by the U.S. government."

The senior CIA official confirmed that the al Qaeda hijackers had traveled through Iran but said details of Tehran's backing for the travel are not clear.

"I don't think we know that this was a deliberate Iranian policy, that is, a sanctioned policy at the highest levels of the Iranian government," the senior official said.

U.S. intelligence officials have said Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and Security, and the Qods Division of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, a unit of hard-line Islamist shock troops, are deeply involved in supporting terrorists, including al Qaeda.

The report also disclosed that "intelligence indicates the persistence of contacts between Iranian security officials and senior al Qaeda figures after [Osama] bin Laden's return to Afghanistan [in 1997]."

The commission report also said that captured al Qaeda terrorist Waleed bin Attash, known as Khallad, disclosed that Iran's government "made a concerted effort to strengthen relations with al Qaeda" after the October 2000 attack on the destroyer USS Cole in Aden harbor, Yemen.

According to the report, bin Laden rebuffed the offer from the Shi'ite regime in Iran because of fears that the cooperation would alienate Sunni supporters in Saudi Arabia.

"Khallad and other detainees have described the willingness of Iranian officials to facilitate the travel of al Qaeda members through Iran, on their way to and from Afghanistan," the report said.

Iranian border inspectors helped the terrorists by not placing travel stamps on passports, which allowed Saudi members to return to Saudi Arabia and not have their passports confiscated by Saudi authorities.

The report noted there is "evidence suggesting that eight to 10 of the 14 Saudi 'muscle' operatives traveled into or out of Iran between October 2000 and February 2001."

Intelligence information showed that senior al Qaeda leaders in Sudan during the 1990s "maintained contacts with Iran and the Iranian-supported worldwide terrorist organization Hezbollah," the report said.

Reuters

Iran Says U.S. Senators 'Daydream' of Regime Change

25 July 2004

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran's Foreign Ministry on Sunday branded as "daydreamers" U.S. senators who have sponsored a bill aimed at toppling Tehran's clerical rulers by supporting opposition groups inside and outside the country.

Republican senators Rick Santorum, representing Pennsylvania, and John Cornyn of Texas introduced the "Iran Freedom and Support Act of 2004" earlier this month.

The bill authorizes the U.S. president to provide \$10 million to foreign and domestic Iranian pro-democracy groups such as radio and television networks in order to promote regime change in the Islamic state.

"Those who draft such plans lag behind the times, they live in their daydreams," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a weekly news conference.

"They neither know Iran, nor the Iranian opposition," he said adding that arch-foe Washington had been "plotting against Iran ever since the (1979) Islamic revolution" without success.

While disillusionment with the 25-year-old Islamic revolution is widespread among Iran's disproportionately youthful population, opposition to the ruling establishment is weak and disorganized.

Despite appeals by California-based satellite channels run by Iranian exiles for mass demonstrations last month to mark the fifth anniversary of student protests brutally crushed by security forces, there were no large gatherings in Iran.

Nor were there any mass protests in February when Islamic conservatives fiercely loyal to the country's clerical rulers swept to victory in elections denounced as a sham by reformists allied to moderate President Mohammad Khatami.

Political analysts say exile opposition groups such as supporters of the former monarchy or the Iraq-based People's Mujahideen Organization enjoy negligible support within Iran itself.

Associated Press

Diplomats Say Iran Building Centrifuges

VIENNA, Austria - Iran is once again building centrifuges that can be used to make nuclear weaponry, breaking the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency's seals on the equipment in a show of defiance against international efforts to monitor its program, diplomats said Tuesday.

Iran has not restarted enriching uranium with the centrifuges - a step that would raise further alarm. But the resumption of centrifuge construction is likely to push European nations, which have been seeking a negotiated resolution, closer to the United States' more confrontational stance.

The United States accuses Tehran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons and wants the U.N. Security Council to take up the issue. Iran denies the charge and says the centrifuges are part of a nuclear program aimed only at producing energy.

Under international pressure last year, the Islamic republic agreed to stop enriching uranium and stop making centrifuges, in a deal reached with Britain, France and Germany.

But the moratorium ended several weeks ago, when Tehran - angry over international perusal of its nuclear program - broke seals placed on enrichment equipment by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the diplomats told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Iranian officials then resumed assembling and installing centrifuges, which can enrich uranium fuel for generating power or developing warheads, the diplomats said.

The diplomats - all familiar with Iran's nuclear dossier - cautioned against equating Tehran's move with the removal of IAEA seals on nuclear equipment by North Korea two years ago as it expelled agency inspectors and declared itself no longer bound by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Unlike in North Korea, the seals on Iran's equipment "were not a legal requirement," one diplomat said. Tehran notified the IAEA of its decision to break the seals, the diplomat said.

Iran continues to respect its pledge not to resume nuclear enrichment, said the diplomat.

Still, the move reflected Iranian defiance of international constraints on the country's nuclear program.

For the past year, the IAEA has been carrying out stringent inspections of Iranian facilities, raising evidence that strengthened suspicions about Tehran's nuclear ambitions. In June, the IAEA's Board of Governors rebuked Tehran in a sharply phrased resolution indicating it felt too many unanswered questions remained.

Iranian officials are tentatively scheduled to meet in the next few days with British, French and German officials in Paris or another European capital to try and salvage their deal. But Tehran's decision to resume work on its centrifuges makes any agreement unlikely.

The Iranians are "driving the European Three into the U.S. camp," said one Western diplomat.

Israel noted the Iranian step with concern, its chief of staff Lt. Gen. Moshe Yaalon said.

"Iran in essence broke the rules of the game, Yaalon said on Israeli state-run television. "We have to pay serious attention to Iran's intention to arm itself with nuclear capabilities. This should not only concern Israel, but all the countries of the free world."

Iran already announced last month that it had planned to restart the program in response to the IAEA rebuke - a decision that led Washington to sound out allies on calling a special session of the IAEA Board of Governors, said another diplomat. The Security Council can only get involved if the board asks it to take up Iran's case.

The Americans dropped the idea because of lack of backing but hope the resumption of Iran's nuclear activities will give them the support they need at the next regular board session, starting Sept. 13, he said.

Iran has not publicly announced that it has resumed building centrifuges. But President Mohammad Khatami told reporters in Tehran earlier this month that "there is no impediment to doing this work."

Sources at Iran's state-run television recently told the AP that the country's top nuclear negotiator, Hasan Rowhani, said Iran restarted building centrifuges June 29 but that the broadcaster was told not to transmit his comments - apparently out of concern over international reaction.

Most of the IAEA's concerns about Iran's nuclear program focus on traces of highly enriched uranium found at several sites and the extent and nature of work on the advanced P-2 centrifuge.

Iran has grudgingly acknowledged working with the P-2, but said its activities were purely experimental. It says the minute amounts of enriched uranium were from equipment bought on the nuclear black market.

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei has indirectly questioned such assertions.

Tehran Times

Iran's Response To Israeli Threats Will Crush Zionist Entity: General

TEHRAN (MNA) – Following the Zionist regime's recent threats claiming that it is preparing a plan to attack Iran's nuclear installations, General Mas'ud Jazayeri, the director of the Armed Forces Public Relations and Publications Office, said on Monday that Tehran's response to the threats would go as far as overthrowing the entire Zionist entity.

The United States' connection with Israel is like a person who brags about unleashing a wild dog, he added.

Jazayeri stressed that Israel's threats originate from the White House and are usually issued when the U.S. faces problems in its internal affairs or foreign policy.

Pointing to the deep enmity of the U.S. and the Zionist regime toward the Islamic Republic, the general said that if they were able to, both the U.S. and Israel would not hesitate to strike Iran.

Israel lacks the logistical capabilities to actualize its threats against Iran's nuclear installations and its officials know that Tehran's response will go as far as overthrowing the entire Zionist entity and that Iran can easily strike the interests of the United States, he added.

In conclusion, Jazayeri said that the Islamic Republic will deliver a strong, decisive, and effective response to Israel's threats.

Telegraph

Iran starts atom tests in defiance of EU deal

by Anton La Guardia – 27 July 2004

Iran has broken the seals on nuclear equipment monitored by United Nations inspectors and is once again building and testing machines that could make fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Teheran's move, revealed to The Daily Telegraph yesterday by western sources, breaks a deal with European countries under which Iran suspended "all uranium enrichment activity".

It will also exacerbate fears that the regional power is determined to make an atomic bomb within a few years.

Enrichment is the most controversial part of Iran's "peaceful" nuclear programme because the same technology used to make low-enriched uranium to fuel nuclear reactors can be used to refine material for bombs.

America has in recent weeks renewed its call for Iran to be referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

However, diplomats said senior officials from the "EU-3" - Britain, France and Germany - would try to coax Teheran back to the path of co-operation at a secret meeting in Paris on Thursday.

Their chances of success seem slim, however, because Teheran now appears to have calculated that America is paralysed by the presidential election campaign and that Europe is too divided to exert real pressure.

Western sources said Iranian officials last month reclaimed equipment for uranium enrichment centrifuges sealed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The centrifuges separate the fissile isotope U235.

In what may be a further escalation, some western sources said Iran was carrying out its threat to begin producing uranium hexafluoride, the gas fed into the centrifuges, but the claim could not be corroborated last night.

Under a deal reached with the EU-3 in October, Iran agreed to come clean about its nuclear programme and announced it would suspend "temporarily" all uranium enrichment as a confidence-building measure.

However, Iran interpreted this to mean only that it would not introduce gas into the centrifuges while remaining free to build and test them.

Under a deal in February, the EU-3 closed this loophole when Iran accepted a wider definition of "suspension" - and it is this "Brussels agreement" which has collapsed.

Angered by the IAEA's condemnation last month of repeated failures to reveal all about its nuclear programme, Hassan Rowhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, wrote to the EU-3 saying his country would resume manufacture, assembly and testing of centrifuges.

Iran argues that its nuclear programme is designed solely to generate electricity for civilian use.

It argues that it is entitled to enrich uranium under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and insists that the suspension deal was a voluntary agreement that could be revoked.

America believes that a succession of reports by IAEA inspectors "revealing that Iran [has lied] systematically for 18 years and has yet to answer many troubling questions about its activities" provide ample evidence that Teheran has violated the treaty.

Inspectors have found that Iran made small quantities of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium.

Teheran has yet to explain the origin of highly-enriched uranium "contamination" detected at several sites.

Nor has it revealed the extent of its more sophisticated "P2" centrifuge programme that only came to light this year, with the unravelling of the "nuclear supermarket" operated by the disgraced Pakistani nuclear scientist, AQ Khan.

British officials say they have no illusions about Iran's intentions, but have hitherto advocated patient diplomacy.

They want to allow inspectors to keep working to "box in" the Iranians to the point where they either give up nuclear weapons ambitions or commit such a blatant violation that the West can win international support for sanctions.

"Iran has resumed research and testing, and every day that passes means it gets closer to mastering the technology," said one western source.

"If the Europeans think they can outfox the Iranians in the carpet bazaar, they are deeply mistaken."

Washington Post

Effort to Curb Iran's Nuclear Ambitions on Allies' Agenda

By Dafna Linzer – 28 July 2004

Senior diplomats from France, Britain and Germany are scheduled to meet with Iranian officials this week in London in an effort to salvage a diplomatic initiative that virtually fell apart last month when Iran announced it would resume building equipment that could be used for making a nuclear bomb, U.S. and European officials said yesterday.

Iran had pledged to halt activities consistent with a weapons program in exchange for trade incentives from the European Union. But it backed out of some terms in June after the Europeans supported a toughly worded rebuke of Iran for failing to cooperate with international inspectors.

It is unclear whether Iran will have anything new to offer at tomorrow's meeting or how the outcome will affect U.S. policy toward the country. The continued standoff and suspicion surrounding Iran's weapons capabilities has embarrassed the European trio, frustrated Washington and worried international nuclear inspectors.

Yesterday, the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that Iran is now rebuilding centrifuges and using parts that had been briefly under IAEA seal as part of Iran's private agreement with the Europeans. The work is being monitored by agency inspectors who have been investigating Iran's nuclear efforts.

The Bush administration, convinced the Iranians are concealing a weapons program, is hoping its European allies will take a tough approach at the upcoming meeting and offer Iran a last chance to suspend its nuclear programs or face international condemnation in the U.N. Security Council, a senior administration official said.

But European diplomats said they are committed to finding a diplomatic way out of the stalemate. "We're just going to sit with them and find out where we can go from here," said one European diplomat who agreed, on the condition of anonymity, to discuss strategy before the meeting.

The Europeans are eager to reach a determination about Iran's intentions before the International Atomic Energy Agency meets in Vienna in September to consider Tehran's cooperation with agency inspectors.

Frustrated by Iran's poor performance during the spring, the IAEA's 35-member board condemned Tehran in a June statement largely written by France, Britain and Germany. It also asked Iran to stop all enrichment production and to reconsider plans for a heavy-water nuclear reactor.

But the three European powers were surprised days later when Tehran responded by announcing that it would resume building equipment essential for a nuclear weapons program.

Under international treaties, Tehran is allowed to make centrifuges and other parts for peaceful nuclear energy. But in the past 18 months, inspectors have uncovered an escalating series of contradictions in Iranian statements, along with evidence that nuclear specialists consider strongly suggestive of a clandestine nuclear weapons program, as the United States has asserted.

The European allies do not disagree with the assessments but believe that diplomatic incentives could help persuade Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. Iran was initially responsive to those efforts, and in April it briefly halted centrifuge construction.

Tehran Times

U.S., Israel Have No Claim On Iran Nuclear Program: Russian Official

28 July 2004

MOSCOW (IRNA) -- A Russian official said here Tuesday that Russia should lodge a protest to the U.S. over its threats against Iran. A Duma member and Head of Iran-Russia Parliamentary Friendship Committee Yuri Savilov, in an interview with the website 'Iranro' added, "The threats by the U.S. and Israel against Iran contravene international law."

He specifically highlighted accusations by U.S. and Israel asserting non-transparency of Iran's nuclear program. The determination of the veracity of the issue rests in the domain of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and not those two countries, he underlined.

Savilov said Israel's claims has no basis since it posses a large arsenal of nuclear armaments, has not signed the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) and is not a member of the IAEA. The U.S. has on occasions misled its public and international community by falsely claiming the existence of biological and chemical weapons in some nations, "Iraq being the last of them." He said Iran is strategic partner and a solid neighbor for Russia. "Moscow and Tehran have recently signed a 10-year economic cooperation agreement."

He said Russia should defend it national interest by bring up its objection to statements by the U.S. and Israel at the UN Security Council.

On a related news on Iran nuclear program, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said last week that Russia upholds the right of Iran as a member of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Lavrov told Egyptian journalists that Russia 'supports the right of Iran as a member-state of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes'.

"We praise prospects for Russian-Iranian relations. Iran is our neighbor and our traditional partner," the minister said.

"The two sides intend to implement projects that will amount to about 10 billion U.S. dollars," the minister added.

Tehran Times

Iran Nuclear Issue Should Be Resolved Through Diplomatic Channels: ElBaradei

28 July 2004

TEHRAN (MNA) -- The International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Mohamed ElBaradei said that Iran's nuclear case should be resolved through diplomatic channels, the Egyptian newspaper reported on Tuesday. ElBaradei told the Al-Ahram "We should resolve Iran's nuclear issue diplomatically. We shouldn't resort to the Security Council."

ElBaradei said the Security Council is the last resort.

ElBaradei said the IAEA hopes to reach a conclusion about Iran's nuclear program, adding that it depends on Iran's transparent cooperation with the nuclear agency.

AFP

International pressure must stop Iran's nuclear ambitions: Israeli general

28 July 2004

JERUSALEM : Iran's nuclear ambitions in the military area should be stopped by international pressure, Israeli army chief General Moshe Yaalon.

"A military operation is not absolutely necessary to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities," Yaalon said on public television. "If we look at Libya we can see that international pressure can be very effective." Libya, long considered a 'rogue' state by Washington, established diplomatic relations with the United States last month after renouncing its quest for weapons of mass destruction. Yaalon said that any Iranian nuclear weapons should not only be of concern to Israel but also to the United States, Europe and moderate Arab countries. Tehran had broken all the rules when it went back on a commitment to suspend its production of nuclear centrifuge equipment which can be used in the production of enriched uranium, which in turn is needed in the production of an atomic bomb, he added. "Israel is taking the risk that Iran acquires a nuclear capability very seriously," said Yaalon after a spokesman for Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards was quoted as saying Monday that Iran would wipe Israel "off the face of the earth" if it dared to attack the Islamic republic's nuclear facilities. The public relations head of the Revolutionary Guards, Commander Seyed Masood Jazayeri, asserted that Iran would not initiate a conflict, but in retaliation to any attack has proved itself to be "harsh, assertive, hard-hitting and destructive."

Christian Science Monitor

Iran increases defiance over nukes

EU trio to resume talks with Iran as report says Tehran is trying to buy nuclear "booster".
by Matthew Clark – 28 July 2004

Iran is stepping up its defiant tone heading into talks with Britain, France, and Germany that diplomats say will begin in Paris Thursday. Meanwhile, in a report Wednesday, Reuters cites "an intelligence agency report being circulated by diplomats" as revealing that Iranian agents are "negotiating with a Russian company to buy a substance that can boost nuclear explosions in atomic weapons." The two-page report cited "knowledgeable Russian sources" for the information, which Washington will likely point to as more proof that Tehran wants to acquire nuclear weaponry. "Iranian middlemen ... are in the advanced stages of negotiations in Russia to buy deuterium gas," the report said. Deuterium is used as a tracer molecule in medicine and biochemistry and is used in heavy water reactors of the type Iran is building. But it can also be combined with tritium and used as a "booster" in nuclear fusion bombs of the implosion type. Reuters reports that "envoys linked to ... the International Atomic Energy Agency" (IAEA) said buying deuterium alone was not evidence of intent to acquire a weapons capability and "cautioned that the report appeared designed to persuade nations who are not convinced Iran wants the bomb." Iran insists that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only. The Los Angeles Times Wednesday cites diplomats as saying Iran is once again building centrifuges that can be used to make nuclear weaponry, breaking the IAEA's seals on the equipment. After breaking the seals, according to diplomats cited in a report from The Independent, Iran then "resumed building and testing the centrifuges, which can be used to make fissile material for a nuclear weapon." An unnamed Western diplomat cited in an EU Business report said the removal of the seals at the Natanz nuclear center, 150 miles south of Tehran, appeared to be a "kind of maneuvering, maybe a symbol of defiance" ahead of renewed talks with the three European powers. A tough resolution co-sponsored by Britain, France, and Germany, and passed by the IAEA in June, rebuked Tehran for failing to cooperate fully with inspectors. This angered Iran, causing it to threaten to resume uranium enrichment. But the resolution did not take the issue to the UN Security Council as the US wished. "Iran now risks pushing Britain into the US camp," asserts The Independent. A Times of London report Tuesday cited diplomatic sources as saying that Iran is "months away" from having the capability to enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb. Meanwhile, Israel is calling for more international pressure on Iran. "A military operation is not absolutely necessary to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities," said Israeli army chief General Moshe Yaalon Wednesday. "If we look at Libya we can see that international pressure can be very effective." As the BBC reported Tuesday, "If Israel becomes convinced that Iran is going down that road unstopped by the United Nations, it could one day take unilateral action, as it did when it bombed Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981."

Iran is increasing its rhetoric against both Israel and the US.

The head of the Iranian army's ground forces, Brigadier General Naser Mohammadifar, said on Wednesday that his troops were "combat ready" and possessed a "martyrdom-seeking spirit", the official news agency IRNA reported.

A spokesman for Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards was quoted Monday as saying that Iran will wipe Israel "off the face of the earth" if that country dared to attack its nuclear facilities. "The United States is showing off by threatening to use its wild dog, Israel," Commander Seyed Masood Jazayeri was quoted by the Iranian Student news agency.

Reuters

U.S. tells Europeans to "hold firm" on Iran

by Carol Giacomo – 28 July 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Bush administration is urging Britain, France and Germany to "hold firm" against any new deals ahead of a meeting on Iran's nuclear program, U.S. officials say.

They also told Reuters that as Washington considers ways to increase pressure on Tehran, they do not see imposing sanctions as an immediate goal.

The latter comment suggests an attempt by Washington to dampen international resistance to bringing the controversial nuclear issue before the U.N. Security Council.

Britain, France and Germany are due to meet in Paris on Thursday with Iranian officials in an effort to persuade Tehran to end activities that Washington and the Europeans believe are aimed at producing nuclear weapons.

U.S. officials with access to intelligence estimates say Iran can achieve that goal in three to five years. Iran insists its program is peaceful.

A push by the Europeans last October won promises that Iran would suspend uranium enrichment and allow snap inspections of nuclear facilities by international monitors.

But Tehran, angered by a tough resolution sponsored by the three states last month rebuking it for poor cooperation with U.N. inspectors, said it would resume manufacture and assembly of uranium enrichment centrifuges, a key nuclear weapons process.

"The Iranians want to drive a wedge between the Europeans and the United States and to drag this process out as long as they can in order to do what they want to do in terms of developing a nuclear capability," a senior U.S. official said.

Negotiating 'tactic'

"What we've been telling the EU three is to hold firm and not cut any deals with the Iranians," he said.

U.S. officials said the Europeans, bruised by Iran's broken promises, should realise Tehran is using negotiations as a delaying tactic while it accelerates its nuclear program.

The administration has been agitating to bring Iran before the U.N. Security Council, which can impose sanctions on violators of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

Iran has fiercely resisted the move.

So have key U.S. allies and Security Council members, who instead have kept the matter before the U.N. nuclear watchdog -- the International Atomic Energy Agency -- as they tried to persuade Tehran to adhere to NPT and IAEA commitments.

Whether the U.S. effort advances depends in part on the European-Iran meeting in Paris.

U.S. officials said a showdown vote on elevating the nuclear issue to the United Nations may not come until November, rather than September as some have suggested.

An IAEA report expected in August is unlikely to contain revelations that would convince the world of an imminent danger from Iran, they said.

Barring that, "the (Security Council's) first reaction is not necessarily sanctions," the senior official said.

The council could give the IAEA more powers to probe Iran's program or have its chairman issue a rebuking statement.

Another senior official said that even if Iran was put before the council, there would be no quick vote on using force or other tough action.

Still, this move would "change the entire global dynamic (by putting Iran) at centre stage in the U.N. body charged with the maintenance of international peace and security," he said.

He said major pressure could be brought to bear if Russia, which is building Iran's nuclear plant at Bushehr but has delayed delivering the facility's fuel, scuttled the deal.

Organising a boycott of Iran's vital oil industry is a "step down the road" but newly improved ties with Libya and Iraq raise the possibility both countries will soon be producing more oil and prove Iran no longer has an "economic whiphand" in this regard, he said.

AFP

Iran ignoring nuclear commitments: US

29 July 2004

The United States is accusing Iran of wantonly flouting international calls to curb its nuclear programs, saying it is engaged in a "direct challenge" to the UN's nuclear watchdog.

The State Department says reports that Iran has gone ahead with a threat to resume production of nuclear centrifuges are "disturbing," a matter of "deep concern" and a sign that the Islamic republic may not be trusted to fulfil its commitments.

"It's an issue that we remain deeply concerned about," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said.

"We view it as a direct challenge to the IAEA's call on Iran to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.

"It certainly raises questions about other commitments Iran has made concerning its nuclear program."

Diplomats say Iran has removed seals the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had placed on the centrifuges to ensure that it was not using its civilian nuclear program as a cover for a secret weapons program.

The centrifuges are used to enrich uranium for use in nuclear power plants but highly enriched uranium can also be used to make nuclear warheads.

Iran has denied US charges it is using its civilian nuclear energy program as a cover for clandestine atomic weapons development.

On Wednesday, a top member of parliament warned in Tehran that the Government would delay ratification of an additional security protocol to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) it had agreed to sign onto.

The protocol would give UN inspectors increased powers, including the right to carry out inspections without warning.

Guardian

Hope of saving Iranian nuclear deal is fading

by Ewen MacAskill – 30 July 2004

British, French and German officials met their Iranian counterparts in Paris yesterday to try to salvage the agreement by which Tehran promised not to develop a nuclear weapons programme.

Pessimism is growing in the Foreign Office where there is now a belief that Iran is intent on creating the capacity to produce a nuclear bomb.

The Foreign Office warned against expecting a breakthrough from the meeting.

"The Iranians are set on research into and development of the nuclear fuel cycle - for which read nuclear weapon - and we are trying to stop them," a spokesman said.

The Iranian position is a setback for European diplomacy, which has been aimed at pursuing dialogue with Tehran. If there had been any serious hope of progress in Paris foreign ministers rather than officials would have attended.

The US, which has no diplomatic relations with Iran, has voiced its despair at the attempts by European states to resolve the issue through diplomacy rather than by the UN security council imposing sanctions.

Israel has hinted that it will bomb Iranian nuclear stations rather than allow it to make a nuclear bomb.

At a private briefing this month the assistant under-secretary for arms at the US state department, John Bolton, a leading hawk, said President Bush would make Iran a priority if he won the election. The US will consider funding groups to destabilise the Iranian government.

Diplomats in Vienna, where the UN's non-proliferation body, the International Atomic Energy Agency, is based, said this week that Iran had broken the IAEA seals on nuclear equipment and resumed clandestine work linked to uranium enrichment.

A Foreign Office source said it would take Iran years to make a nuclear weapon, even if it was unhindered.

The IAEA is due to report at the end of August on the level of cooperation offered by Iran and its board will discuss this in September.

The board could refer the issue to the UN security council, though it would be reluctant to do so. But the US secretary of state, Colin Powell, said yesterday that it was more and more likely that the matter of Iran's nuclear programmes would have to be referred to the security council.

He said developments in Iran in the past week were troubling.

The mood in the Foreign Office contrasts with that last autumn when the foreign secretary, Jack Straw, and his German and French counterparts flew to Tehran to secure what they thought was a deal on the nuclear issue.

Iran continues to deny that it is intent on making a nuclear weapon and insists it is interested in purely civilian applications, making electricity.

• Ariel Sharon said yesterday that Israel would only reconsider the need for its "deterrent capability" - the code for nuclear weapons - when there was a comprehensive Middle East peace and its neighbours had abandoned weapons of mass destruction.

Israel refuses to admit or deny that it has nuclear weapons but international experts estimate that it has an arsenal of 100 to 200 warheads, making it one of the biggest nuclear powers.

Washington Post

No Progress in Nuclear Talks With Iran

U.N. Discussions Likely After European Effort, Powell Says

By Dafna Linzer – 30 July 2004

A meeting yesterday between European and Iranian officials over Tehran's suspect nuclear program ended with the sides agreeing to continue discussions, but Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said it is increasingly likely the matter will have to be brought to the U.N. Security Council.

The Paris meeting, attended by French, German and British diplomats, was the first since Iran resumed nuclear work in June that it had promised to suspend 18 months earlier in exchange for European trade incentives.

The three European powers, trying to defuse a standoff over Iran's nuclear efforts, want Tehran to work with U.N. nuclear inspectors and halt activities that could lead to weapons development.

"The discussions are continuing with Iranian authorities toward obtaining all the guarantees relative to the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program," said Herve Ladsous, spokesman for the French Foreign Ministry. He said the meeting was aimed at reestablishing trust between the sides.

But Powell, traveling in Kuwait yesterday, made it clear that the United States believes Iran is concealing its true intentions and suggested the European efforts were unlikely to succeed. "It is getting more and more likely that this matter is going to have to be referred to the Security Council," Powell said.

"It is our judgment that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon," Powell said. "The world has to take note of this."

The secretary talked by phone with his German, French and British counterparts ahead of the meeting, which had been scheduled for London and then moved to Paris.

European diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said both Washington and Moscow would be briefed on the outcome of the discussion.

The Bush administration wants Iran rebuked by the Security Council for violating the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has been pressuring allies to take a harder line with the Islamic republic.

In June, the Europeans crafted a condemnation of Iran for failing to fully cooperate with international inspectors. But Iran responded by breaking its commitments to halt certain nuclear efforts.

A European diplomat, who spoke ahead of yesterday's meeting, did not discount the possibility of going to the Security Council but said that currently appears remote. "All different scenarios are in play, but the goal is to try to convince Iran to come back to the process."

Since June, Iran has resumed building centrifuge parts and is conducting tests at an enrichment facility. But the activities, which Iran is allowed to carry out for peaceful purposes, are being done under the eye of

nuclear inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency who have been trying to determine whether the country has a clandestine weapons program.

Iran has denied it is intending to build a nuclear bomb, but in recent months inspectors have turned up inconsistencies in Iran's claims and have found evidence suggesting research in the area of nuclear weapons development.

Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, told reporters in Tehran yesterday that "Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology should be respected."

"We have started a process of cooperating with the E.U. and the IAEA and are determined to continue that," he said.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Adam Ereli said the United States would decide whether to bring up Iran in the Security Council after the IAEA's 35-member board of governors meets in September.

"This is a subject that not only concerns us but is bothersome and troubling to the other members of the board of governors," Ereli said.

Noting pressure from Washington and a U.N. report on Iran's activities due in September, one European diplomat said: "This is a critical moment, and we think it's a kind of turning point. The ball is in Iran's camp right now, and they should take careful steps to cooperate with inspectors."

Global Security Newswire

Iranian Efforts Could Prompt Other Middle Eastern Countries to Re-Examine Nuclear Policies, Experts Warn

by Mike Nartker – 30 July 2004

WASHINGTON — Iran's development of a declared nuclear weapons capability could lead non-nuclear countries in the Middle East to re-examine their atomic weapons policies, according to a book released last week by the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Nuclear Tipping Point examines the nuclear histories and policies of four Middle Eastern countries — Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey. None of the four countries is likely to renounce past decisions to abstain from seeking nuclear weapons, according to the book. However, that could change in the face of long-standing tensions between the Arab and Sunni Muslim states of the Middle East and non-Arab Shiite Muslim Iran and the increased military and diplomatic strength such weapons would give Tehran.

"A rogue state's successful acquisition of a nuclear weapon could trigger a range of potentially destabilizing regional responses, including the further proliferation of nuclear weapons beyond the rogue," the book's authors wrote.

The risk of non-nuclear countries reconsidering their policies has not been a "conscious focus" of U.S. policy, said CSIS Senior Adviser Robert Einhorn, one of the book's authors.

"We need to start thinking about these issues right now," he told *Global Security Newswire* Wednesday.

Iran argues that its nuclear program is solely peaceful, but Western leaders fear it is developing a nuclear weapons program.

There has been growing suspicion that Syria may be seeking to obtain nuclear weapons-related technologies, including reported speculation that Damascus might have been a client of top Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who has acknowledged providing nuclear weapons technology to Iran, Libya and North Korea. The International Atomic Energy Agency said earlier this month, though, that there are no signs that Syria is conducting nuclear weapons-related activities.

Even so, "Syria is on people's watch list at a minimum," Einhorn said.

Iran's development of a nuclear weapons capability would present Syria with a "confusing and conflicting situation," wrote Henry L. Stimson Center President Ellen Laipson in the book. While Iran and Syria have been engaged in an informal strategic partnership since the 1980s against Israel, Damascus still maintains a strong attachment to an ideal of pan-Arab unity and non-Arab Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would serve as a "blow to the Arab psyche," she wrote.

Were Iran to obtain and then lose a nuclear weapon capability, either through a deliberate choice to surrender the arms or through a military strike, it may serve to push Syria farther into the non-nuclear camp, according to Laipson.

"It would make it harder to sustain the argument for expending scarce resources on nuclear weapons and could tip the balance in favor of a more prudent, slow, hedging strategy or total avoidance of considering any nuclear weapons," she wrote.

Iran denies uranium centrifuge is part of plan to build nuclear bomb

by Paul Harris – 1 August 2004

Iran said yesterday that it had restarted the building of uranium enrichment centrifuges which the United States says are part of a bid to develop an atomic bomb.

American officials claim that Iran intends to enrich weapons-grade uranium, but Tehran insists it only wants to develop its ability to produce electricity. 'We have started building centrifuges,' said Iranian foreign minister Kamal Kharrazi in a press conference.

Iran's move goes back on a pledge last year to suspend all its uranium enrichment activities, secured by Britain, France and Germany. The European strategy was criticised in the US as being too soft on Iran. Now that Iran has backtracked, it will strengthen hawkish American officials who are seeking to confront Iran over its suspected weapons programmes. Relations between Iran and the US have been on a steady path to confrontation for months. The US wants to bring Iran before the United Nations Security Council in a move to possibly bring sanctions for violating the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran said it was pressing ahead with its centrifuge construction programme in response to a resolution last month from the International Atomic Energy Agency, monitoring Iran's nuclear installations, which deplored Tehran's failure to co-operate with its inspectors. Iran is also believed to have restarted work at a uranium conversion plant near the city of Isfahan. However, Kharrazi insisted that Iran had not yet enriched any uranium. 'We have accepted suspending uranium enrichment and we are continuing that suspension based on our definition,' he said.

He complained that Iran was being denied its right to develop nuclear power plants to cope with a burgeoning domestic demand for electricity. 'We just want to produce fuel for our plants and we are not after nuclear weapons,' he added.

That argument cuts little ice with many in Washington. Senior US officials claim the power plants are just a cover for a weapons programme intended to make Iran the first Islamic fundamentalist regime to have nuclear weapons. US intelligence estimates that Iran can achieve an atomic bomb in three to five years, although some experts say it could be sooner.

In London, the foreign office played down the issue, saying it was awaiting the IAEA's full findings this autumn.

Talks are still taking place in Paris between British, French and German officials on the way forward with Iran. While the US is pushing for Iran's nuclear dossier to be referred to the UN Security Council, which has the power to impose sanctions if it is found to be in breach, European administrations are thought to favour encouraging Iran to co-operate.

Suggestions that, if re-elected in November, George Bush will take on Iran, have alarmed the Labour Party in Britain which is wary of being drawn into another Middle East confrontation.

So far the IAEA has found potentially weapons-related activities in Iran, but no proof that Tehran is developing atomic bombs. However, US officials have disclosed that last February IAEA inspectors found so-called P-2 centrifuge parts, which are more suited to making weapons than the P-1 parts that Iran has confirmed it possesses.

The rhetoric against Iran has been building up in Washington, not least after the commission appointed to examine the 11 September atrocity detailed links between al-Qaeda and Iran.

Last week the US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was visiting Iraq, warned Tehran against interfering in its neighbour's fledgling democracy after reports of weapons and money travelling across the Iranian border.

Deutsche Presse Agentur

Iran to take a tough line in talks with 'big three'

1 August 2004

Tehran has told an Iranian delegation in Paris for nuclear talks with representative of the EU's big three to adopt a tough stance in their discussions, sources close to the Iranian parliament said yesterday.

"We are on the verge of either giving in forever to politicized demands initiated by the United States, or making clear that countries like Iran cannot be simply deprived of legitimate rights such as peaceful nuclear technology," the parliamentary sources said.

Iranian officials from the foreign ministry and atomic energy organization are involved in reportedly difficult talks in Paris with representatives from the UK, France and Germany over Iran's controversial nuclear program.

"Before going into any details, the main question in Paris remains whether Iran should have the right to have peaceful nuclear projects or not," the sources said.

"The three EU states had in October last year granted Iran the basic right to have such a technology and even promised assistance but later revised their standpoint due to what Tehran believes was American pressure," the sources added.

Tehran has called on the EU to stick to agreements made last October and not let the nature of the issue become political.

The EU three, in line with the International Atomic Energy Agency, have charged Iran with not fully disclosing information about its nuclear program.

International Herald Tribune

Iran rebuffs Europe on atom plans

2 August 2004

TEHRAN - Talks that the European Union's "big three" held with Iran last week on its nuclear program produced "no substantial progress," EU diplomats said Sunday, as Iran renewed its commitment to acquiring nuclear energy.

Officials from Britain, France and Germany met with an Iranian delegation in Paris on Thursday and Friday, and emphasized their wish to see a halt to Iran's work on the nuclear fuel cycle. "Each side repeated their positions, and there were no changes," said a diplomat from one of the European states. "We would like Iran to stop nuclear fuel cycle work, but Iran sees its suspension as just a temporary measure. Therefore, no substantial progress was made," the source told Agence France-Presse. An Iranian government spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, speaking to reporters on Sunday, said Iran was continuing to talk to Britain, France and Germany on the use of nuclear energy. Washington strongly suspects Iran is using a civilian nuclear program as a cover for a secret nuclear weapons project. It has been lobbying for the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, to refer Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN Security Council, which could impose sanctions.

The talks in Paris prepare the ground for a September meeting of the board of governors of the energy agency, which is expected to discuss Iran's program. Asefi said that since the Europeans did not fulfill promises to close Iran's nuclear dossier at the energy agency's June meeting, Iran felt no obligation to abide by an agreement that demanded Iran suspend manufacturing and assembling parts used in nuclear activities.

Under the agreement, reached last year with Britain, France and Germany, Iran had agreed to suspend uranium enrichment, allow tougher inspections and file a comprehensive declaration of its nuclear activities.

The measures were aimed at "building confidence" while the energy agency conducted a major probe of Iran's bid to generate electricity through nuclear power, seen by the United States as a cover for secret weapons development.

But since then, experts from the energy agency have found omissions in Iran's reporting, inspection visits have been delayed and the regime has backed away from a pledge to suspend all enrichment-related activities.

On Saturday, Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi of Iran confirmed that his country had resumed building nuclear centrifuges, though it had not resumed enriching uranium. The announcement by Kharrazi hardened the lines between Iran and the United States. Diplomats said last week that Tehran had resumed building equipment used to make uranium hexafluoride, which, when processed in centrifuges, can be enriched to low levels for power generation or high levels for nuclear weapons.

Reuters

U.S. Says Iran Must Cooperate on Nuclear Program

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Bush administration warned Iran on Monday that it would face rising international pressure if it refused to back down on its nuclear program, saying Tehran would be isolated if it continued on that path.

President Bush said the United States and the European Union's "big three" members -- France, Britain and Germany -- "expect there to be full disclosure, full transparency of their nuclear weapons programs."

White House national security adviser Condoleezza Rice further warned, "This regime has to be isolated in its bad behavior, not 'engaged.'"

Rice said the administration was working with the Europeans and other International Atomic Energy Agency members on "a very tough set of resolutions" demanding Iranian cooperation.

"Iran is going to be confronted," Rice told Fox News, adding that the resolutions should be ready for consideration in September. If Iran refused to cooperate, she said, "They're going to be isolated."

Bush told reporters at the White House, "We are working with our friends to keep the pressure on the mullahs to listen to the demands of the free world."

The warnings came two days after Iran said it had resumed building nuclear centrifuges, which Washington says are intended to enrich uranium to weapons grade for use in bombs.

Iran's decision backtracks from a pledge in October to Britain, France and Germany to suspend all uranium enrichment-related activities.

Rice brushed aside a question about whether France would go along with U.S. plans to increase pressure.

"The French and the Germans and the British have been very clear to the Iranians that the activities that they're currently engaged in, or say that they are going to resume, are unacceptable, and we just have to keep working with the French and the British and the Germans to make certain that they stick to that position," Rice said.

"It's been our position all along that the Iranians are dangerous in this regard, and that the international community has got to be tough and steadfast here," she added.

Iran insists it needs enriched uranium for power stations being built to meet booming domestic demand for electricity.

Secretary of State Colin Powell (news - web sites) warned Iran last week that its case was increasingly likely to be referred to the sanctions-imposing U.N. Security Council for failing to meet IAEA commitments.

Washington says Iran's nuclear energy program is a cover for development of nuclear weapons.

USA Today

Inspectors, diplomats: Iran acquiring nuclear materials

2 August 2004

WASHINGTON (GNS) — The brewing problem of Iran's apparent plan to make nuclear weapons is approaching a flash point, threatening to create another explosive situation for Americans in the Middle East and spark a regional arms race.

International nuclear inspectors and European diplomats report that Iran is moving aggressively to build equipment and acquire materials necessary for atomic bomb making.

Iran insists it only wants atomic energy. And so far, its nuclear program is in compliance with the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

But unfolding events suggest Iran is now moving into dangerous stages where its nuclear energy program can be converted quickly to make weapons — potentially by 2005.

"It is our judgment that Iran is developing nuclear weapons and a nuclear weapons program, and we'll all have to take note of this," Secretary of State Colin Powell told reporters Thursday while traveling in Kuwait.

"It is a very troubling development."

The fear is that Iran will try to go nuclear while U.S. forces are stretched thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"They (Iranians) know we are involved in a more complex operation in Iraq than was anticipated by policy-makers," said Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser during the Carter administration.

If Iran succeeds in making weapons, an anti-American theocracy that supports terrorists and the eradication of Israel would be capable of nuclear strikes anywhere in the Middle East using its well-known arsenal of Shahab medium-range missiles.

Mounting evidence

Officials at the Vienna, Austria-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recently confirmed that Iran has resumed construction of high-speed aluminum centrifuges that could be used to "enrich" uranium to weapons-grade levels.

That comes as European diplomats are reporting that Iranian agents are trying to buy deuterium gas. This can be used to make nuclear fuel for energy, but it also is commonly used for boosting nuclear explosions.

This caps a mountain of evidence over several years that indicates Iran is assembling a nuclear energy program in such a way as to make it readily convertible to weapons production and difficult to destroy.

Iran's nuclear facilities are spread out near population centers making pre-emptive bombing strikes like the ones Israelis executed in 1981 against Iraq's nuclear weapons program very difficult.

Israeli officials have said they will not allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons, raising concerns of pre-emptive airstrikes.

That could spark a disastrous Israel-Iran war, imperiling U.S. efforts to stabilize and repair Iraq and potentially forcing U.S. forces to enter the conflict.

If Iran succeeds in converting its energy program to make weapons, it could prompt Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia to do the same, turning the greater Middle East into nuclear tinderbox.

Failing diplomacy

So far, the Bush administration has been trying to pressure Iran diplomatically with negligible results.

Iran has refused direct talks with the United States.

"There is no justification for accepting suggestions to hold negotiations with a country which adopts a bullying attitude toward others," Hassan Rohani, secretary general of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, recently told Iranian state television.

Iran will only negotiate with Germany, France, Britain and the IAEA, and even then it appears highly disingenuous.

In June, the IAEA rebuked Tehran for not fully cooperating with nuclear inspectors.

In retaliation, Iran said it was resuming production and testing of its enrichment centrifuges, which it had agreed in October to keep idle.

Bush diplomats are now working with European allies to bring the Iranian problem to the United Nations Security Council in hopes of imposing economic sanctions.

A special panel convened by the Council on Foreign Relations has suggested U.S. rapprochement with Iran in a final attempt at a diplomatic solution.

This approach helped improve relations with China in the 1970s. But even the panelists have their doubts that it will do much to fix the U.S.-Iran relationship that soured 25 years ago when Islamic revolutionaries took Americans hostage.

"In all candor, the history of the last 25 years does not offer much encouragement that any part of this will work," said panel co-chairman Robert Gates, former director of the CIA.

ITAR-Tass

Russian spokesman condemns idea of Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear plant

translation by BBC Monitoring Middle East – 5 August 2004

Moscow, 5 August: Russia's atomic energy authority regards a possible attack by Israel on the [Iranian] Bushehr nuclear power station, plans for which have leaked into the press, as "a venture which would have extremely dangerous consequences, one which no sensible politician would contemplate". The official spokesman of the Federal Agency for Atomic Energy (FAAE), Nikolay Shingarev, has expressed this view to an ITAR-TASS correspondent. He was commenting on Western and Russian media reports that the Israeli general staff has drawn up plans for an operation to carry out "pre-emptive" air strikes against the Bushehr nuclear power in southern Iran.

No sensible politician or military official, Shingarev believes, "would contemplate an air strike against an operational power reactor". Therefore, "such reports can be regarded as a political provocation". However, "the logic of war is often not compatible with common sense", he said, recalling that during the Iran-Iraq conflict the nuclear power station being built in Bushehr by a Western company [Siemens-Kraftwerk Union] "came under missile attack and the cupola of the reactor hall was damaged". According to Shingarev, the rest of the world, including the IAEA and Israel itself, are well aware that the nuclear power unit being built at Bushehr by Russian specialists "has no connection whatsoever with the work allegedly being done in Iran on nuclear weapons". In accordance with an inter-governmental

agreement, nuclear fuel for the first set of the Bushehr nuclear power station "will be supplied by the Russian company Tvel as soon as a protocol on the return of spent nuclear fuel to Russia has been signed with the Iranian Atomic [Energy] Organization," Shingarev stressed.

Asked about the possible consequences of an air strike against a reactor loaded with low-enriched uranium, the Russian atomic energy explained that "this could result in the radioactive contamination of an extensive area around the reactor, causing numerous deaths".

For its part, the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies recalled that the Bushehr nuclear power station is located on the shores of the Persian Gulf, alongside a town of the same name, and only 300-400 km from international holiday resorts in the [United] Arab Emirates.

Even if the station was hit before it was loaded with nuclear fuel, "this would cause numerous deaths amongst the workforce and local inhabitants", sources in Moscow noted. "About 1,500 specialists from Russia and other CIS countries and several hundred Iranians are working" on the construction of the nuclear power plant. "The families of building workers - about 700 women and children - are housed in a residential complex half-a-kilometre from the power station building," the agency [presumably the FAAE] added.

Financial Times

Support grows for UN showdown with Iran over nuclear programme

by Guy Dinmore and Gareth Smyth – 5 August 2004

The US administration is gaining European support for a diplomatic showdown with Iran over its nuclear programme next month, as a first step towards imposing sanctions.

US officials and European diplomats said momentum was building after a bad tempered meeting in Paris last week between Iran and France, Germany and the UK - the three governments that negotiated a nuclear deal with Iran last October.

Iran was warned that if it continued to move in the wrong direction, it could not avoid the issue being referred to the United Nations Security Council at the next meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency on September 13.

Iran accused the Europeans of being US lackeys and not upholding their side of last year's agreement. At its last meeting in June, the IAEA "deplored" shortcomings in Iran's co-operation with the UN nuclear watchdog, accusing it of withholding information on its advanced P-2 centrifuges and tests to enrich uranium, and demanding clarification.

Iran has since resumed assembling centrifuges. US and European diplomats believe it may also start enrichment. While neither development would breach Iran's commitments if declared to the IAEA, the US insists Tehran has lied to the agency and not complied with its obligations as signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Although meetings with Tehran continue, loss of European support would deal a serious blow to Iran which has long pursued a strategy of widening transatlantic divisions over policy towards the Islamic regime.

The hardliners' rigging of elections this year also depleted Tehran's diplomatic capital with Europe. Officials said France and the UK supported the US position, while Germany was close. The Bush administration, which accuses Iran of using its civilian nuclear programme as a front for developing weapons, is piling on the pressure while refusing to negotiate directly with Iran. Condoleezza Rice, national security adviser, said this week that Iran would be confronted, probably in September, with some "very tough resolutions".

"The Iranians have been trouble for a very long time. And it's one reason that this regime has to be isolated in its bad behaviour, not quote-unquote, engaged," Ms Rice told Fox News, also referring to Iran's alleged refusal to co-operate over its detention of al-Qaeda suspects. Referral to the UN Security Council is intended to lead to condemnation of Iran's alleged breach of its nuclear commitments and a possible warning of sanctions that could, for example, halt Russia's construction of a civilian reactor in Iran.

Iran insists it has co-operated fully with the IAEA, but the rhetoric in Tehran has hardened since the Paris talks. With nationalist feeling running high, no politician or newspaper is airing the idea that Iran should accept long-term international supervision of its nuclear programme.

"Why are our politicians persisting in negotiations with the Europeans, who have broken their promises?" blazed an editorial in the conservative Jomhuri Eslami. "Regardless of the content of Iran's nuclear programme, the EU should not address the Iranian nation in this tone. Maybe they don't know who they are talking to."

Hossein Shariatmadari, chief of the conservative Kayhan newspaper, regretted that Iranian negotiators had "not torn up" a European draft that made "colonialist demands".

He said the trio wanted a declaration that Iran would not leave the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a recognition that concerns about its nuclear programme were justified and an undertaking to keep them informed about its nuclear activities.

Some deputies to Iran's conservative-dominated parliament argued Iran should not ratify the additional protocol allowing more intrusive inspections by the IAEA. Some said Iran should leave the NPT. Hossein Mousavian, a senior member of the Supreme Council of National Security, said Iran had nothing to fear from sanctions, which had proved ineffective over 25 years.

He also brushed off reports that either the US or Israel might launch a military strike on Iran's facilities. "These threats are baseless, just part of a psychological war," he said.

Tehran Times

Iran Entitled To Use Nuclear Technology For Peaceful Purposes: Chinese Ambassador

7 August 2004

TEHRAN (MNA) - "Iran is entitled to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes," said Lio G. Tan Chinese Ambassador to Tehran in a press briefing at the embassy.

Commenting on recent developments in the relations between People's Republic of China and I. R. of Iran, the ambassador voiced his government's opposition to the politicization of Iran's nuclear issue. "We believe in peaceful settlement of Iran's nuclear issue through dialogs within the framework of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations."

Ever since his mission in Iran, the volume of bilateral trade has substantially grown to reach five billion and 600 million Rials. The ambassador said Chinese international firms are working in Iran in the fields of metro, road building, telecommunications, and oil and gas drilling. "During last year, Iran-China political, economic, and cultural relations grew to an ideal level and bright future is ahead for boosting bilateral cooperation in more fields."

He believes there is no obstacle to further development of the economic relations between the two countries.

Since implementation of the open-gate policy in 1972, China has made rapid development by starting reformation from the villages and stressing on agricultural development, transferring advanced technology, training for technological development, boosting foreign trade, making development while being loyal to ethics, and finally establishing friendly relations with all world countries. "The I. R. of Iran can utilize these experiences to make optimal use of its potentials for rapid economic development."

Lio G. Tan expressed hope that Iran-China bilateral trade would hit \$10bn before the termination of 2004.

China has granted \$500m credit to Iran, the largest foreign aid it has ever offered to a foreign country. Chinese government and firms have also granted humanitarian aids (20 million yuan and \$1m respectively) to the quake-stricken people of Bam in addition to other aids in cash by the Chinese humanitarian societies and NGOs. "Two thousand years ago, the Silk Road connected China to Iran," said the ambassador, adding "We must create a modern-day Silk Road to develop the two countries and help peace and progress in the world."

Present in the press briefing was also Hosseini, an advisor to Center for Dialog Among Civilizations, who talked about his experience in China.

Associated Press

Rice: Stop Iran's Nuclear Intentions

by William C. Mann - 8 August 2004

WASHINGTON - With Iran intending to step up its nuclear program, a top White House aide said Sunday the world should be "worried and suspicious" and must not let Tehran produce a nuclear weapon.

National security adviser Condoleezza Rice also said the Bush administration sees a new international willingness to act against Iran's nuclear program. She credited the changed attitude to the Americans' insistence that Iran's effort put the world in peril.

She would not say whether the United States would act alone to end the program if the administration could not win international support.

Iran's foreign minister, Kamal Kharrazi, announced a week ago that his country had resumed building nuclear centrifuges. He said Iran was retaliating for the West's failure to force the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency to close its file on possible Iranian violations of nuclear nonproliferation rules.

Kharrazi said Iran was not resuming enrichment of uranium, which requires a centrifuge. But, he said, Iran had restarted manufacturing the device because Britain, Germany and France had not stopped the investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"The United States was the first to say that Iran was a threat in this way, to try and convince the international community that Iran was trying, under the cover of a civilian nuclear program, to actually bring about a nuclear weapons program," Rice said on CNN's "Late Edition."

"I think we've finally now got the world community to a place, and the International Atomic Energy Agency to a place, that it is worried and suspicious of the Iranian activities," she said. "Iran is facing for the first time real resistance to trying to take these steps."

Bush, in his 2003 State of the Union address, included Iran with North Korea and Iraq in an "axis of evil" dedicated to developing nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Since then, North Korea has publicly resumed its nuclear development program. In Iraq, invading U.S.-led forces have found no such programs after President Saddam Hussein was deposed.

Iran announced in June that it would resume its centrifuge program. Afterward, the U.S. official whose job is to slow the global atomic arms race, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton, told Congress that Iraq was jabbing "a thumb in the eye of the international community."

On NBC's "Meet the Press," Rice reasserted that the world has fallen in line on Iran and said she expects next month to get a very strong statement from the IAEA "that Iran will either be isolated, or it will submit to the will of the international community."

She also said, "We cannot allow the Iranians to develop a nuclear weapon. The international community has got to find a way to come together and to make certain that that does not happen."

New York Times

Diplomacy Fails to Slow Advance of Nuclear Arms

by David K. Sanger – 8 August 2004

KENNEBUNKPORT, Me., Aug. 7 - American intelligence officials and outside nuclear experts have concluded that the Bush administration's diplomatic efforts with European and Asian allies have barely slowed the nuclear weapons programs in Iran and North Korea over the past year, and that both have made significant progress.

In a tacit acknowledgment that the diplomatic initiatives with European and Asian allies have failed to curtail the programs, senior administration and intelligence officials say they are seeking ways to step up unspecified covert actions intended, in the words of one official, "to disrupt or delay as long as we can" Iran's efforts to develop a nuclear weapon.

But other experts, including former Clinton administration officials, caution that while covert efforts have been tried in the past, both the Iranian and North Korean programs are increasingly self-sufficient, largely thanks to the aid they received from the network built by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the former leader of the Pakistani bomb program. "It's a much harder thing to accomplish today," said one senior American intelligence official, "than it would have been in the 90's."

Mr. Khan's sales have also complicated the Bush administration's efforts to disarm North Korea. A new assessment of the country has come in one of three classified reports commissioned by the Bush administration earlier this year from the American intelligence community. Circulated last month, the report concluded that nearly 20 months of toughened sanctions, including ending major energy aid, and several rounds of negotiations involving four of North Korea's neighbors have not slowed the North's efforts to develop plutonium weapons, and that a separate, parallel program to make weapons from highly enriched uranium was also moving forward, though more slowly.

The desire to pursue a broader strategy against Iran's nuclear ambitions is driven in part, officials say, by increasingly strong private statements by Israeli officials that they will not tolerate the development of an Iranian nuclear weapon, and may be forced to consider military action similar to the attack against a nuclear reactor in Iraq two decades ago if Tehran is judged to be on the verge of deploying a weapon. (In contrast,

North Korea's neighbors, especially South Korea and China, are seeking stability first, and disarmament as a longer-term goal, diplomats from the region say.)

"The evidence suggests that Iran is trying to keep all of its options open," said Robert M. Gates, the director of central intelligence under President Bush's father, who recently headed a detailed study of Iran that was critical of what it called the administration's failure to engage the country. "They are trying to stay just within their treaty obligations" while producing highly enriched uranium, said Mr. Gates, who is now the president of Texas A&M University, "and I think they can go with a weapon whenever they want to."

Mr. Gates and other outside experts were interviewed on the sidelines of a four-day conference on the challenges of nuclear terrorism and the spread of unconventional weapons held at the Aspen Institute last week. Separately over the past few weeks, five senior officials from the administration and Asian and European nations, all with varying access to the intelligence about the Iranian and North Korean programs, were interviewed about their status. Not surprisingly, their judgments about the progress the two countries have made were not always in accord.

The new report on North Korea, which has circulated among senior American officials and has been described to The New York Times, appears to have been written far more cautiously than the National Intelligence Estimate that erroneously described advanced weapons programs in Iraq. It describes in detail vast gaps in American knowledge. For example, it acknowledges that the whereabouts of North Korea's stockpile of more than 8,000 spent nuclear fuel rods has been a mystery since early 2003, but also concludes that the North has had plenty of time to reprocess the rods into enough fuel for six to eight additional weapons. Before then, North Korea was judged by the C.I.A. to have one or two weapons developed a decade ago.

For its part, Iran has begun to assemble the necessary ingredients and perhaps the same crude, Chinese-origin bomb design that the Khan network sold to Libya — and may be just a few years away, intelligence experts have said.

Taken together, the intelligence conclusions pose both security and political challenges for President Bush, who is visiting here this weekend to attend a wedding and visit his parents at their seaside estate. Mr. Bush has said he will not "tolerate" either country becoming a nuclear power, ignoring, at least publicly, the near certainty that North Korea has already reached that status. But he has never defined that term, or set deadlines. He is already under attack by the Democratic presidential candidate, Senator John Kerry, for allowing both countries to move forward in their programs while the White House concentrated on the one member of what Mr. Bush has called the "axis of evil," Iraq, that turned out to have virtually no evidence of a continuing nuclear program.

While the intelligence report on North Korea, which has also been described to some allies, was cautiously worded — the product, said one official who has seen it, of "a chastened intelligence community" — it makes it clear that North Korea now probably has enough weapons-grade plutonium to test a weapon in the future, which would allow it to demonstrate its capacity. While it retained raw nuclear material under a 1994 accord with the Clinton administration, that material was under close surveillance until the inspectors were thrown out on Dec. 31, 2002.

"The conventional wisdom now is that they have completely reprocessed all of it," said Gary Samore, who headed nonproliferation efforts at the National Security Council under President Bill Clinton and has conducted a detailed assessment of North Korea for the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. "They had a huge window of opportunity when we were invading Iraq, and they appear to have made maximum use of it."

He said many analysts in the intelligence agencies believed that a "whiff" of a nuclear byproduct detected by an American spy plane off the coast of North Korea last year was evidence that the reprocessing was under way. But others say the experiment was never successfully repeated. They say it is possible that North Korea ran into difficulty in the chemical process of converting spent fuel into bomb material. "You can't assume a linear progression," said one senior American official.

Mr. Bush has said little recently about the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs, in sharp contrast to his regular recitations about the danger posed by Iraq in the period before the war last year. When he and his aides do speak about the problem in public, they still refer to progress, but mostly progress in getting other countries to put pressure on Iran and North Korea.

"It's very frustrating," said one former official who left the Bush administration recently and believes that the administration has failed to draw clear "red lines" beyond which North Korea would not be allowed to expand its arsenal. The official noted that Mr. Bush and his aides had been talking as if North Korea and Iran would follow the model of Libya, which disarmed earlier this year in an effort to re-integrate its economy

with the West. But, the official argued, Iran does not need to do that because it has robust trade with Europe, and North Korea still receives considerable aid from China.

In the past two weeks Iran announced that it was resuming the production of centrifuges needed to produce highly enriched uranium though it has said it is still “suspending” actual enrichment activities. While the United States has threatened to take the issue to the United Nations Security Council, it has yet to win support from many allies.

North Korea has publicly rejected a new American initiative to allow international aid to flow gradually to the country in return for speedy disarmament and giving inspectors the right to examine any suspected site.

Several of Mr. Bush’s aides have said they expect little concrete progress before the presidential election. The Iranians appear to be betting that Mr. Kerry, if elected, would talk directly to their leaders. Mr. Kerry has also said he would engage in bilateral discussions with North Korea; Mr. Bush has insisted on multilateral talks.

Meanwhile, Israel’s concerns are creating a pressure of their own. “They are doing what they can to delay the Iranian program and preparing military options,” said one official who has dealt with the Israeli government on the issue, providing no details about what they might be. But it is unclear that the Israelis have the military reach to strike Iran’s facilities. Moreover, American intelligence officials say, Iran learned from the Iraqi experience and has spread its facilities around the country, including in urban areas as a defense against such a strike.

Reuters

US can't send nuclear case to UN Council – Iran

9 August 2004

TEHRAN, Aug 9 (Reuters) - Iran said on Monday that Washington had no grounds to send its nuclear case to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

U.S. officials have expressed growing concern about Tehran's nuclear programme in recent weeks, making it clear Washington wants Iran's case sent to the Security Council to prevent it from developing nuclear arms.

Iran denies any intention of building atomic weapons. It says its nuclear programme is needed to generate electricity to meeting rising demand.

"Only the Americans say Iran's case will be referred to the United Nations Security Council. But to send Iran's case to the Security Council they need reasons and we have to have committed violations," Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi told reporters.

"Iran has not committed any violations, and whatever Iran has done is in accordance with its international obligations," he added.

Tehran last month said it had resumed making parts for uranium enrichment centrifuges, which can be used to make bomb material.

But Iran said it is entitled to carry out such activities under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and says it will not give up its right to pursue enrichment technology to produce fuel for nuclear power reactors.

"Iran's nuclear policy was adopted by the country's high-ranking officials and is in line with preserving Iran's sovereignty and independence," Kharrazi said.

International Herald Tribune

Bush's policy endangers U.S. security Nuclear proliferation

by Lawrence J. Korb – 9 August 2004

While unexpected, the decision by the Bush administration last month to oppose inspections and verification as part of the Fissile Materials Cutoff Treaty is not surprising. Since taking office, the administration has taken a number of steps that have undermined the ability of the United States and the world community to curb the proliferation of nuclear weapons. But given the fact that Bush agrees with most analysts that the greatest danger facing the United States is a nuclear weapon falling into the hands of a rogue state or terrorist group, his actions are counterproductive and defy good sense.

The fissile materials cutoff would ban the production of enriched uranium and plutonium, the two ingredients used for setting off a chain reaction nuclear explosion. It was designed to reinforce the Nuclear

Nonproliferation Treaty and impose restraints on the three nuclear powers which are not parties to that treaty. By refusing to establish an inspection regime for the fissile materials cutoff, the Bush administration has thwarted a 10-year effort by the international community to lure Pakistan, India and Israel into accepting some oversight of their nuclear production programs. The Nonproliferation Treaty strikes a grand bargain among the five declared nuclear powers and the rest of the world that the non-nuclear states will not develop nuclear weapons, in return for which the nuclear powers will reduce and eventually eliminate their own nuclear weapons.

Since coming into office, the Bush administration has undermined this reciprocal arrangement in a variety of ways, despite the fact that it could make America safer and more secure.

First, instead of eliminating nuclear weapons, the Bush administration is seeking funds to develop two new nuclear weapons, a low yield "mini-nuke" and a robust nuclear earth penetrator or "bunker buster."

Second, because the development of these new weapons will require testing, the administration has refused to submit the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to the Senate for ratification and has instead sought funds to ready the Nevada test site for future testing. In its proposed 2005 budget, the administration has requested \$6.8 billion for conducting research and expanding U.S. nuclear capabilities. This is twice the amount the U.S. spent in this area a decade ago.

Third, since these new nuclear weapons are in reality first-use weapons, the administration has revised its nuclear strategy. In its December 2001 Nuclear Posture Review, the administration made clear that it would be prepared to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, including launching preemptive attacks with nuclear weapons against nations that were close to acquiring nuclear arsenals. This new strategy may well have led North Korea and Iran to accelerate their own nuclear programs. Fourth, while arguing that other nations cannot withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty, the Bush administration itself withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and has actually deployed a national missile defense system in Alaska. Although this system is designed to combat an intercontinental missile threat from North Korea, it has already provoked Russia to increase its nuclear capabilities and may well provoke China to do the same. In addition to undermining the Nonproliferation Treaty, the Bush administration has weakened America's own nonproliferation efforts. For example, it has decreased funding for the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction initiative that has deactivated more than 6,000 nuclear warheads in the former Soviet Union.

Moreover, while the administration signed a Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty with Russia that commits both sides to reduce the number of operationally deployed nuclear weapons to between 1,700 and 2,000 by Dec. 30, 2012, it plans to keep another 3,000 nuclear weapons in storage, refuses to include new verification mechanisms in the treaty, and has not agreed to compliance beyond 2012. Preventing Iraq from acquiring nuclear weapons or passing them on to a terrorist group like Al Qaeda was a primary justification for a war that has caused thousands of American casualties and cost the American taxpayer hundreds of billions of dollars. Yet in its approach to nonproliferation, the administration is doing things that increase the dangers of nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.

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Associated Press

Iran Seeks Support on Nuclear Technology

9 August 2004

VIENNA, Austria Aug. 9, 2004 — Iran is demanding Europe's leading powers back its right to nuclear technology that could be used to make weapons, dismaying the Europeans and strengthening Washington's push for U.N. sanctions, a European Union official and diplomats said Monday.

Declining to respond to a list of demands presented by Iran last week whose contents were made available to The Associated Press the Europeans are urging the Iranian government to instead make good on a pledge to clear up suspicions about its nuclear ambitions.

But diplomats said Iran's demands undermine the effort by France, Germany and Britain to avoid a confrontation. They had hoped to persuade Tehran to give up technology that can produce nuclear arms, but now are closer to the Bush administration's view that Iran should be referred to the U.N. Security Council for violating the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the diplomats said.

The Iranian list, presented during talks in Paris, includes demands that the three European powers: Support Iran's insistence its nuclear program have access to "advanced technology, including those with dual use," which is equipment and know-how that has both peaceful and weapons applications.

"Remove impediments" sales restrictions imposed by nuclear supplier nations preventing Iran access to such technology.

Give assurances they will stick by any commitment to Iran even if faced with "legal (or) political ... limitations," an apparent allusion to potential Security Council sanctions.

Agree to sell Iran conventional weapons.

Commit to push "rigorously and systematically" for a non-nuclear Middle East and to "provide security assurances" against a nuclear attack on Iran, both allusions to Israel, which is believed to have nuclear arms and which destroyed Iraq's nuclear reactor in a 1981 airstrike to prevent it from making atomic arms.

France, Germany and Britain last year had held out the prospect of supplying Iran with some "dual use" nuclear technology, but only in the distant future and only if all suspicions about the Iranian program were laid to rest.

With Iran still under investigation, the demands stunned senior French, German and British negotiators, said a European Union official familiar with the Paris meeting.

Ignoring the list, the Europeans instead urged Iran to act on its leaders' pledge to clear up suspicions about their nuclear ambitions by Sept. 13, when the International Atomic Energy Agency meets to review Iran's nuclear program, the official said.

The Paris talks ended "with the two sides talking past each other," said a diplomat familiar with the meeting, who like the other diplomats and the EU official agreed to discuss the matter only if granted anonymity.

In London, the Foreign Office declined to comment on the negotiations with Iran, but said Britain is "not prepared to stand by and watch them collect the necessary technology to make a weapon."

Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi insisted in Tehran that the international community has no reason to be suspicious about his country's nuclear plans.

"Iran has not violated any of its commitments to international treaties in its nuclear program," Kharrazi was quoted as saying by the official Islamic Republic News Agency.

The Bush administration insists Iran wants to make nuclear weapons, despite Tehran's claims that it is interested in uranium enrichment and other "dual use" technology only to help generate electricity.

During a campaign stop Monday, President Bush said U.S. officials are working with other nations to make sure the IAEA, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency based in Vienna, asks Iranian officials "hard questions" about their weapons activities.

"Iran must comply with the demands of the free world and that's where we sit right now," Bush said in Annandale, Va. "My attitude is that we've got to keep pressure on the government, and help others keep pressure on the government so there's going to be universal condemnation of illegal weapons activities."

Iran agreed last October to suspend uranium enrichment and cooperate with the IAEA investigation of its nuclear activities in exchange for a promise from the France, Germany and Britain to provide technology for peaceful nuclear programs once all open questions had been answered.

It subsequently stopped enrichment, but continued related activities. That fell short of a demand from the Europeans that it permanently renounce the process, which can both produce fuel for generating electricity and create the core of a nuclear warhead.

While enrichment remains suspended, Iran announced last week that it has resumed full-scale manufacture of centrifuges, which are used in uranium enrichment. It said the move was a reaction to the Europeans not persuading the IAEA to end its investigation.

Past American attempts to have the IAEA refer Iran to the Security Council foundered in part because of European resistance. But the hardline Iranian stance has emboldened U.S. officials.

A U.S. official in Washington, who spoke Monday on condition of anonymity, said the Paris meeting was a factor in the Bush administration's stronger confidence that it will get support for an IAEA board resolution asking for Security Council action against Iran.

Reuters

U.N. Links Iran Uranium Trace to Pakistan-Source

by Francois Murphy – 10 August 2004

VIENNA (Reuters) - The U.N. nuclear watchdog has linked highly enriched uranium particles found in Iran to Pakistan, which fits Tehran's explanation they came from equipment bought on the black market, a Western diplomat said on Tuesday.

Iran says its nuclear program is aimed solely at generating electricity and that particles of enriched uranium - including some bomb-grade samples -- found in the country by U.N. inspectors were not produced in Iran.

While the finding by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) appears to strengthen Iran's case against Washington's charge that Tehran is trying to build a nuclear bomb, diplomats warned the finding was far from conclusive.

The IAEA has matched contamination from uranium enriched to 54 percent to a sample from Pakistan, a Western diplomat told Reuters.

"The IAEA has tentatively concluded that at least one instance of the 54 percent contamination matches a sample provided by Pakistan," he said, confirming a report on Tuesday by Jane's Defense Weekly.

Uranium contamination is one of two key questions the IAEA is seeking an answer to in its investigation of Iran's nuclear program. The other is the extent of Iran's work on advanced P-2 centrifuges, machines that enrich uranium.

Jane's said 36 percent enriched uranium contamination had also been matched with a foreign sample.

That contamination came from Russian equipment that China supplied to Pakistan and was then sold to Iran by the illicit nuclear network set up by the founder of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, Abdul Qadeer Khan, Jane's said.

Diplomats contacted by Reuters could not confirm that report but said that if it were confirmed, many questions about Iran's nuclear program would still remain unanswered, including the origin of weapons-grade uranium samples found in Iran.

Bomb-grade uranium is enriched to 90 percent or above.

"There are many important outstanding questions remaining. It's great that the agency is now becoming able to start to link things up, but by no means is the process over," one diplomat said.

The IAEA declined to comment on the report, saying its latest findings would be presented in a report ahead of its September 13 Board of Governors meeting.

For over a year, Washington has been pressing the 35-nation board to report Iran to the U.N. Security Council for hiding its uranium enrichment program from the IAEA for nearly two decades.

Guardian

Diplomacy sidelined as US targets Iran

by Simon Tisdall – 10 August 2004

The US charge sheet against Iran is lengthening almost by the day, presaging destabilising confrontations this autumn and maybe a pre-election October surprise.

The Bush administration is piling on the pressure over Iran's alleged nuclear weapons programme. It maintains Tehran's decision to resume building uranium centrifuges wrecked a long-running EU-led dialogue and is proof of bad faith.

The US will ask a meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency on September 13 to declare Iran in breach of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, a prelude to seeking punitive UN sanctions.

Iran's insistence that it seeks nuclear power, not weapons, is scoffed at in Washington. John Bolton, the hawkish US under-secretary of state for arms control, says there is no doubt what Tehran is up to. He has hinted at using military force should the UN fail to act. "The US and its allies must be willing to deploy more robust techniques" to halt nuclear proliferation, including "the disruption of procurement networks, sanctions and other means". No option was ruled out, he said last year.

Last month in Tokyo, Mr Bolton upped the ante again, accusing Iran of collaborating with North Korea on ballistic missiles.

Israel, Washington's ally, has also been stoking the fire. It is suggested there that if the west fails to act against Iran in timely fashion, Israel could strike pre-emptively as it did against Iraq's nuclear facilities in 1981, although whether it has the capability to launch effective strikes is uncertain.

The US has been pushing other countries to impose de facto punishment on Iran. Japan has been asked to cancel its \$2bn (£1.086bn) investment in the Azadegan oilfield and Washington has urged Russia to halt the construction of a civilian reactor.

Condoleezza Rice, the US national security adviser, said at the weekend there was a new international willingness to confront Tehran, but declined to rule out unilateral action if others did not go along.

That will fuel speculation in Tehran and elsewhere that the Bush administration may resort to force, with or without Israel, ahead of November's election. Options include "surgical strikes" or covert action by special forces.

Such a move would be a high-risk gamble for George Bush. After the WMD fiasco, there would inevitably be questions about the accuracy of US intelligence. In the past Iran has vowed to retaliate. Although it is unclear how it might do so, the mood in Tehran has hardened since the conservatives won fiddled elections last winter.

"I think we've finally got the world community to a place, the IAEA to a place, that it is worried and suspicious," Ms Rice said in one of a string of interviews with CNN, Fox News and NBC television. She vowed to aim some "very tough resolutions" at Iran this autumn. "Iran will either be isolated or it will submit," she said.

Officials in London say she exaggerated the degree of unanimity on what to do next. Britain, France and Germany are the EU troika which has pursued a policy of "critical engagement" with Iran, despite US misgivings.

Jack Straw, the foreign secretary, has invested considerably in resolving the issue, travelling to Tehran on several occasions. A diplomatic collapse would be a blow.

"There has been no such decision at all," a Foreign Office spokesman said yesterday of US efforts to take the dispute to the security council. "The dialogue [with Iran] is ongoing and the government still believes that negotiation is the way forward at this stage." But Britain is in danger of being dragged down a path of confrontation that it does not want to travel.

Nuclear weapons are not Washington's only worry. The US charges include Iran's perceived meddling in Iraq, where the blame for the surge in Shia unrest is laid partly at Tehran's door. It also takes exception to Iran's ambiguous attitude to al-Qaida and Tehran's backing for anti-Israeli groups such as Hizbullah. The recent Kean report on 9/11 detailed unofficial links between some of the al-Qaida hijackers and Iran.

Investigations into other terrorist attacks since 9/11, including this year's Madrid bombings and failed plots in Paris and London, point to an Iran connection, though the extent of any government involvement is obscure.

While the Bush administration is set on a tougher line there is no consensus even in Washington on what to do.

A report by the independent Council on Foreign Relations says since Iran is not likely to implode any time soon, the US should start talking.

"Iran is experiencing a gradual process of internal change," the report says. "The urgency of US concerns about Iran and the region mandate that the US deal with the current regime [through] a compartmentalised process of dialogue, confidence building and incremental engagement."

That suggestion was mocked by a Wall Street Journal editorial as "appeasement". Hawks say the nuclear issue is too urgent to brook further delay. And therein lies the rub. Bringing Iran in from the cold is a time-consuming business. But the Bush administration, as usual, is in a hurry.

AFP

Iran tests upgraded medium-range missile following Israeli success

11 August 2004

TEHRAN, Aug 11 (AFP) - Iran on Wednesday tested an upgraded version of its conventional medium-range Shahab-3 missile, two weeks after Israel tested its Arrow II anti-missile missile, the official IRNA news agency reported.

"The defense ministry announced that the latest version of the Shahab-3 was tested today," IRNA said.

"This experiment on the ground was aimed at evaluating modifications that were recently made to the missile on the basis of research results," it said.

The missile is considered the mainstay of Iran's military technology and portrayed as purely defensive and dissuasive, but specifically as a weapon against Israel.

In the July 28 test of Israel's Arrow II missile, the Jewish state made it clear the improved anti-missile system was aimed squarely at fending off any attack by archfoe Iran.

Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani had said Saturday that the test of the Shahab-3 was imminent, adding that the improvements to the missile "not only concern its range, but other specifications as well." Tehran fears Israel could strike its controversial nuclear program, which Washington suspects is being used to covertly develop weapons.

"The Israelis are trying hard to improve the capacity of their missiles, and we are also trying to improve the Shahab-3 in a short time," Shamkhani said, denying the Islamic republic was working on a more advanced Shahab-4.

Tehran finalised its testing of the Shahab-3 only in June.

The missile, whose name means "meteor" or "shooting star" in Farsi, is thought to be capable of carrying a 1,000 kilogramme (one-ton) warhead at least 1,300 kilometers (800 miles), well within range of Israel.

Six Shahab-3 missiles were paraded in Tehran in September during commemorations of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. One of them carried a banner declaring: "We will wipe Israel from the map".

The Shahab-3 is believed to be derived from technology acquired from Pakistan and North Korea, though Shamkhani denied any dealings with Pyongyang.

Arab News

Iran Does Not Rule Out Talks With US, Says Khatami

12 August 2004

TEHRAN, 12 August 2004 — Iran is not opposed to resuming talks with arch-foe Washington in future, provided US officials stop trying to topple the Islamic Republic, President Mohammad Khatami said yesterday.

Washington broke off a tentative dialogue with Iranian officials over Iraq and Afghanistan in May 2003 after accusing Tehran of harboring Al Qaeda members involved in attacks in Saudi Arabia.

Iran denies assisting Al Qaeda as well as a host of other US accusations including developing nuclear weapons and stirring up violence in Iraq. "If the Americans say the Iranian system should be changed then that is flagrant interference in our affairs," Khatami told reporters.

"But if America changes its direction and does not want to impose its demands on us and proves its good will, then why shouldn't our nation sit down and talk with it?"

Unlike the European Union which has adopted a policy of "critical engagement" with Iran's reformist government, Washington has preferred to isolate Tehran with which it broke diplomatic ties in 1980.

President George W. Bush has instead sought to reach out to the Iranian people, saying his government supports their aspirations for freedom and democracy.

"The key is in America's hands," Khatami said. "Our nation will not yield to this master and servant attitude. ... (But) we don't have enmity against anyone forever. If our interests necessitate it we can adopt another policy," he said.

Meanwhile, state-organized demonstrations are to be held throughout Iran against attacks by allied forces on holy sites in south Iraq, the students' news agency ISNA reported. The Islamic Propagation Office said that the rallies are scheduled to be held after mass prayer ceremonies tomorrow.

The shrines of the two Shiite Imams Ali and Hussein are located in the two holy cities of Najaf and Karbala in southern Iraq and are considered as two of the most sacred sites for Shiite Moslems in Iran.

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday harshly condemned the actions by US forces in Najaf and warned that neither the Iraqi nation nor the Islamic world would forget the alleged violation of Islamic sanctities.

"Is this the way of the United States and its president to create democracy in Iraq or rather a way to deprive the Iraqi people of their right for democracy," Khamenei said on state television.

In another development, a foreign national arrested in southeast Iran is probably from Bangladesh and not the United States as reported earlier, an Interior Ministry spokesman told ISNA yesterday.

The ministry in Teheran had confirmed the arrest of a foreigner along the border with Pakistan, but said it could not be certain of the nationality. The arrest occurred Tuesday, the spokesman said.

"He is probably from Bangladesh but introduced himself as a US citizen but we are still trying to clarify his real nationality," he said. The man was identified by news website Baztab in Farsi letters as "Arminster", age 32. The website reported he was Jewish and worked in a special field of chemistry.

The man reportedly entered Iran illegally from Pakistan and was returning to Pakistan when arrested by border guards in Sistan-Balochistan province.

World worried about Iran nuclear aims: Rumsfeld

12 August 2004

BAKU (AFP) - Iran's nuclear ambitions remain a major worry for the world amid fears that states possessing weapons of mass destruction might cooperate with terrorist organizations, US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said.

Speaking to reporters after talks with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Rumsfeld noted that Iran had been on a list of countries that the United States describes as terrorist states for many years.

"One of the gravest concerns the world faces is the nexus between a terrorist state that has weapons of mass destruction and terrorist networks," he said.

"So it's understandable that nations, not just in this region but throughout the world, are so deeply concerned about what's taking place in Iran."

Rumsfeld said he had discussed his concern over Iran's nuclear program with Aliyev, who recently hosted a visit by Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

The Iranian leader told reporters in Tehran on Wednesday that his country had made "a lot of progress" in developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and "will not seek permission from anyone" to continue its program.

Rumsfeld's comments came at the end of a brief visit here during which he thanked the Azeris for providing troops to US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Rumsfeld noted that the United Nations was looking for countries to provide additional troops to protect a UN effort to organize elections in Iraq.

But Azerbaijani Defense Minister Safar Abiyev, who joined Rumsfeld at the news conference, offered no indication that Azerbaijan was prepared to contribute more than the 150 soldiers it has already deployed in Iraq.

"Azeri peacekeepers are already in Iraq and have a mandate to fulfill and will continue to carry out their tasks," Abiyev said.

The Azeri minister called on the United States to support Azerbaijan in its long-running dispute with neighboring Armenia over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory located within Azerbaijan but inhabited mainly by ethnic Armenians.

Rumsfeld responded that that issue was being handled by the so-called Minsk Group and said Washington hopes for a peaceful resolution of the issue. He added however that the United States supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Azerbaijan was Rumsfeld's third stop on a trip that began in Oman. He was scheduled to arrive in Ukraine later Thursday.

Bloomberg

Japan Rejects U.S. Call to Pull Out of Oil Project, Kyodo Says

15 August 2004

Aug. 16 (Bloomberg) -- Japan does not intend to abandon a commitment to help develop an oilfield in Iran because of a U.S. request that Japan reconsider its policy, Kyodo News said, citing Japanese Trade Minister Shoichi Nakagawa.

"There will be no policy reversal at the current stage," Kyodo quoted Nakagawa as saying yesterday.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell on Thursday said Japan should reconsider its energy investments in Iran, Kyodo reported.

The U.S. claims Iran's enriched uranium program is intended to develop nuclear weapons, while Iran says it needs the fuel for power plants being built to meet the country's booming demand for electricity, Kyodo said.

Japan will stay in close contact with the U.S. in proceeding with its February agreement to develop Iran's Azadegan oilfield and in dealing with that country's suspected development of nuclear weapons, Nakagawa said, according to Kyodo.

Israel is in our range, says Iran

Reuters – 16 August 2004

An Iranian military chief said yesterday that Israel and the US would not dare to attack his country since it could strike back anywhere in Israel with its latest missiles, a news agency reported.

"The entire Zionist territory, including its nuclear facilities and atomic arsenal, are currently within range of Iran's advanced missiles," the Isna students news agency quoted Yadollah Javani, the head of the Revolutionary Guards political bureau, as saying. "Therefore, neither the Zionist regime nor America will carry out its threats" against Iran, he said.

Officials have highlighted Iran's military capabilities in recent weeks in response to some media reports that Israel or the US could try to destroy its nuclear facilities.

Last week Iran said it had successfully tested an upgraded version of its Shahab-3 ballistic missile. Military experts said the unmodified Shahab-3 was capable of striking Israel or US bases in the Gulf.

America and Israel have accused Iran of developing nuclear weapons, a charge it denies. Defence experts say air strikes are unlikely to disable Tehran's nuclear capability.

Ha'aretz

Iran may get uranium from S. Africa following cooperation deal

By Gideon Alon – 17 August 2004

Iran and South Africa signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday on bilateral cooperation. The deal paves the way for the two countries to expand trade ties, and may include South Africa selling uranium to Tehran.

The memorandum was signed by South African Defense Minister Mosiuoa Lekota and his Iranian counterpart Rear-Admiral Ali Shamkhani. This was the first such visit by a South African defense minister to Tehran since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

At Tuesday's signing ceremony, Shamkhani praised South Africa for its position on Iran's nuclear weapons program, which Tehran says is for peaceful purposes. He said that the agreement will lead to the expansion of bilateral cooperation in all areas.

Lekota reportedly said that making peaceful use of nuclear energy is the legitimate right of the Islamic Republic.

Brigadier General Yossi Kuperwasser, the head of Military Intelligence's research department, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday that Iran is expected to have full nuclear ability by early 2007. Kuperwasser also said that Iran will purchase the technology it needs to enrich uranium by the first half of next year.

Iran said Tuesday it would destroy Israel's Dimona nuclear reactor if the Jewish state were to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. A senior commander warned that Iranian missiles could reach Dimona.

"If Israel fires a missile into the Bushehr nuclear power plant, it has to say goodbye forever to its Dimona nuclear facility, where it produces and stockpiles nuclear weapons," said the deputy chief of the elite Revolutionary Guards, Brig. Gen. Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr, in a statement.

Zolqadr was referring to the site of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr, a coastal town on the Gulf. Built with Russian assistance, the reactor is due to come on stream in 2005.

Iran says its nuclear program is strictly for the generation of electricity. But Israel and the United States strongly suspect Iran is secretly building nuclear weapons.

Zolqadr did not say how Iran would attack Dimona, but the head of the Revolutionary Guards' political bureau, Yadollah Javani, said Iran would use its Shahab-3 missile.

"All the territory under the control of the Zionist regime, including its nuclear facilities, are within the range of Iran's advanced missiles," Javani said in a separate statement.

Iran announced last week it had successfully test-fired a new version of the Shahab-3, which has a range of 1,296 kilometers. Israel is about 965 kilometers west of Iran.

Israel has developed with the United States the Arrow anti-ballistic missile system. It is said to be capable of intercepting and destroying missiles at high altitudes.

Iran warns of preemptive strike to prevent attack on nuclear sites

18 August 2004

DOHA, Aug 18 (AFP) - Iranian Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani warned Wednesday that Iran might launch a preemptive strike against US forces in the region to prevent an attack on its nuclear facilities.

"We will not sit (with arms folded) to wait for what others will do to us.

Some military commanders in Iran are convinced that preventive operations which the Americans talk about are not their monopoly," Shamkhani told Al-Jazeera TV when asked if Iran would respond to an American attack on its nuclear facilities.

"America is not the only one present in the region. We are also present, from Khost to Kandahar in Afghanistan; we are present in the Gulf and we can be present in Iraq," said Shamkhani, speaking in Farsi to the Arabic-language news channel through an interpreter.

"The US military presence (in Iraq) will not become an element of strength (for Washington) at our expense. The opposite is true, because their forces would turn into a hostage" in Iranian hands in the event of an attack, he said.

Shamkhani, who was asked about the possibility of an American or Israeli strike against Iran's atomic power plant in Bushehr, added: "We will consider any strike against our nuclear installations as an attack on Iran as a whole, and we will retaliate with all our strength.

"Where Israel is concerned, we have no doubt that it is an evil entity, and it will not be able to launch any military operation without an American green light. You cannot separate the two."

A commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards was quoted in the Iranian press earlier Wednesday as saying that Tehran would strike the Israeli reactor at Dimona if Israel attacks the Islamic republic's own burgeoning nuclear facilities.

"If Israel fires one missile at Bushehr atomic power plant, it should permanently forget about Dimona nuclear center, where it produces and keeps its nuclear weapons, and Israel would be responsible for the terrifying consequence of this move," General Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr warned.

Iran's controversial bid to generate nuclear power at its plant being built at Bushehr is seen by arch-enemies Israel and the United States as a cover for nuclear weapons development.

The latest comments mark an escalation in an exchange of threats between Israel and Iran in recent weeks, leading to speculation that there may be a repeat of Israel's strike against Iraqi nuclear facilities at Osirak in 1981.

Iran insists that its nuclear intentions are peaceful, while pointing at its enemy's alleged nuclear arsenal, which Israel neither confirms nor denies possessing.

Shamkhani told Al-Jazeera it was not possible "from a practical standpoint" to destroy Iran's nuclear programs because they are the product of national skills "which cannot be eliminated by military means."

He also warned that Iran would consider itself no longer bound by its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the event of an attack.

"The execution of such threats (to attack Iran's nuclear installations) would mean that our cooperation with the IAEA led to feeding information about our nuclear facilities to the attacking side, which (in turn) means that we would no longer be bound by any of our obligations" to the nuclear watchdog, he said.

Diplomats said in Vienna Tuesday that the IAEA would not say in a report next month whether Iran's nuclear activities are of a military nature, nor will it recommend bringing the case before the UN Security Council.

The IAEA board is due to deliver the report on Iran's nuclear activities during a meeting at the organization's headquarters in Vienna from September 13 after the last of a group of IAEA inspectors returned from Iran last week.

The UN's nuclear agency is conducting a major probe into Iran's bid to generate electricity through nuclear power.

The Islamic republic has agreed to temporarily suspend uranium enrichment pending the completion of the IAEA probe, but is working on other parts of the fuel cycle and has recently resumed making centrifuges used for enrichment.

Reuters

US: Iran Says Can Have Nuclear Weapons in 3 Years

By Saul Hudson - 19 August 2004

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A senior U.S. official said on Thursday Iran has conceded to European powers it could build nuclear weapons in three years as Washington turned up the heat on Tehran to abandon what it says is a drive to acquire them.

But European diplomats, who have sought to engage Iran in negotiations on the issue, were skeptical of the U.S. assertion, which could help a U.S. drive to refer Tehran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions.

"Iran has told the EU three (Britain, Germany and France) that it could possess nuclear weapons within three years," U.S. Under Secretary of State John Bolton told Reuters. "The Iranian assertion gives the lie to the public contention that their nuclear program is entirely civil and peaceful in purpose."

At a conference earlier this week, the hawkish appointee of Republican President Bush, made a similar statement about Iran's assertions to the Europeans at talks last month. But on Thursday, he specified how soon Iran had said it could possess a weapon -- a detail that coincides with the earliest U.S. estimates for an Iranian bomb.

U.S. officials with access to intelligence estimates say Iran can achieve a bomb in three to five years.

The United States hopes that referring Iran to the Security Council could pressure the country to stop programs it believes would be a danger in the Middle East, notably to its close ally Israel.

European diplomats doubted Iran had made such a claim during last month's negotiations.

"Our reports of the meeting do not mention that such a statement was made," a European diplomat from one of the countries involved in the talks said.

The European Union three share information with the United States on their negotiations, although they have made public few details about talks they held last month, diplomats said.

In recent weeks, oil-rich Iran has intensified its standoff over its nuclear programs.

The Europeans won concessions from Iran last year. But Iran was angered when the U.N. nuclear watchdog issued a tough rebuke over cooperation with its inspectors in June.

And last month, it went back on an agreement with the Europeans and said it would resume work on centrifuges, which can be used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.

Bolton, who is skeptical talks with Iran will be successful, wants Tehran referred to the Security Council as early as next month during a meeting of the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency.

"We do not believe that anyone will be dissuaded by these thinly veiled Iranian threats, made by Iran in an effort to avoid being reported to the U.N. Security Council," Bolton said.

BBC News

Tehran seeking role in Mid-East

by Miranda Eeles – 28 August 2004

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami has warned that peace cannot come to the Middle East without the help of Iran.

Mr Khatami was responding to questions from reporters about American policies in the region.

He also said that Iran was willing to provide any guarantee to the International Atomic Energy Agency that it was not developing nuclear weapons.

Pressure is building on Iran ahead of a fresh round of discussions on Teheran's nuclear programme at the IAEA.

Iran accused

Speaking in Tehran, President Khatami said despite its many problems with the US, Iran would not let these effect its policies towards Iraq.

Mr Khatami said if the Americans had trusted Iraq's neighbours and countries in the region, instead of continuing their occupation, the problems in Iraq could have been solved.

American officials and some members of the Iraqi interim government have accused Iran of causing trouble in Iraq.

A visit to Tehran by the Iraqi deputy prime minister to try and ease relations between the two neighbours is expected soon.

US call

Mr Khatami also talked about what he described as Iran's natural and legal right to develop peaceful nuclear power.

Speaking positively about the negotiations with the IAEA, Mr Khatami said if the agency recognised Iran's right to enrich uranium and accepted it as a member of the nuclear club, all problems would be solved. He then called for the IAEA board of governors to take Iran's case off the agenda by next month's meeting. He added that he believed this was unlikely, however. The US has been lobbying the agency to report Iran to the United Nations Security Council. Washington believes Tehran is secretly developing nuclear weapons, a charge that Iran denies.

Observer

FBI probes 'spy suspect deep inside' the Pentagon

by Paul Harris in New York – 29 August 2004

The FBI is investigating a suspected spy deep in the Pentagon who may have fed secrets about US policy on Iran to Israel.

Officials are believed to be preparing for an arrest as soon as this week. They fear a Pentagon analyst passed sensitive details of White House policy to the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, an influential pro-Israeli lobby group.

The investigation is potentially explosive as it heightens tensions over Iran's suspected efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

Israel has long said it will launch pre-emptive attacks against the Iranians if it feels threatened. Iran, which recently resumed a programme to build equipment to enrich uranium, has said it will retaliate if attacked.

News of the FBI inquiry is damaging and embarrassing to President George Bush as the suspect is believed to work as an analyst in the office of top Pentagon official Douglas Feith.

Feith is a well-known figure in the group of Bush administration hawks who pushed aggressively for an invasion of Iraq. He has close ties to Bush and Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Feith's brief at the Pentagon includes a team specifically assigned to Iranian issues.

A Pentagon statement said the employee under investigation was at the level of desk officer, and 'not in a position to have significant influence' on US policy towards any foreign country.

However, CBS television news, which broke the story, said the suspect handed over a draft of a US presidential directive on policy towards Iran to the lobby group. That would be a serious leak of information, which would effectively give Israel access to an explosive, highly sensitive area of US decision-making in the Middle East.

CBS said the FBI investigation involved wire tapping, surveillance of the suspect and a search of the person's computer. The Israeli government and the lobby group have denied the allegations. The lobbyists called them 'baseless and false' and said they were co-operating fully with the FBI.

A spokesman for the Israeli embassy in Washington said the allegations were 'false and outrageous'.

Israel claims to have obeyed a ban on spying on America for the past 20 years since Jonathan Pollard, a former US naval intelligence officer, was convicted of handing secrets over to Tel Aviv in the mid-Eighties. Pollard is serving a life sentence for his crime.

When Pollard was arrested, Israel denied he had been its spy. While he was on the run from American police Pollard sought sanctuary at the Israeli embassy, but was turned away.

However, in 1998 Israel finally admitted that Pollard was indeed one of its spies. He has been granted Israeli citizenship and the Israeli government is now lobbying for his release.

Los Angeles Times

Report on Iran Key to Spying Inquiry

By Mark Mazzetti and Richard B. Schmitt – 29 August 2004

WASHINGTON — The man at the center of an FBI investigation into possible Israeli espionage in Washington is a career Pentagon employee, a colonel in the Air Force reserves and a national security analyst who at the end of the Cold War taught himself Farsi and refashioned himself as an expert on Iran, officials said Saturday.

The FBI is trying to determine whether he is also a spy.

U.S. officials confirmed Saturday that the target of the investigation was Larry Franklin, the Pentagon's top Iran policy analyst and a confidant of Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz and Douglas J. Feith, who, as undersecretary for policy, was the Pentagon's third-ranking official.

The FBI is trying to ascertain whether Franklin turned over a draft presidential directive on policy toward Iran last year to two people affiliated with the Washington-based American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which may have given the information to Israel.

Officials are concerned because the directive was still being debated by U.S. policymakers at the time, possibly putting the Israeli government in a position to influence the final document, officials said. U.S. policy toward Iran is vital to Israel, which is gravely concerned about the expanding nuclear capability of the country run by Shiite Muslim clerics.

The probe, which is being handled by the FBI's counter-espionage division, might not result in espionage charges against Franklin.

Instead, the Pentagon analyst could be charged with lesser offenses such as improper disclosure or mishandling of classified information. Or he could be exonerated.

A U.S. official with knowledge of the case expressed doubts Saturday that Franklin's alleged actions rose to the level of espionage. Instead, he said it was more likely that Franklin, who maintains close ties with Israeli officials, passed documents to Israel without knowing the seriousness of his actions.

"From everything I've seen, the guy's not a spy," the official said. "The guy's an idiot."

According to the official, the closeness of the U.S. relationship with Israel means that top officials of the two nations often share sensitive information. Nevertheless, Franklin should have known what information was and was not permissible to be shared, he said.

"We knew this guy had the relationship for a while, and he shared some stuff beyond what he should be sharing," the official said.

Franklin did not respond to phone messages Saturday seeking comment.

Sources said that Franklin, a longtime official with the Defense Intelligence Agency, three years ago joined the Pentagon's Office of Near East and South Asian Affairs, the group charged with developing the Pentagon's policy for the Middle East. The office is run by William J. Luti, who in turn reports to Feith.

Since joining Luti's office, Franklin has been the Pentagon's leading Iran policy analyst, a job that took on greater importance after President Bush included Iran in his "axis of evil" and his appointees at the Pentagon advocated a hard line toward Iran.

As a member of the Air Force reserves, Franklin is assigned to a DIA reserve unit based in Washington.

A Pentagon statement released Friday characterized Franklin as a "desk officer" with no significant influence on U.S. policy. Yet some who have worked with him offer a different picture, saying he was very influential in high-level Pentagon policy debates.

"You're not talking about someone toiling away in the bowels of the U.S. government," said a former Pentagon official who worked for Feith until last year and spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Franklin was the go-to guy on Iran issues for Wolfowitz and Feith."

In addition, the former official characterized Franklin as an ideological ally of Wolfowitz, Feith and Luti. The three men were among the Bush administration's leading advocates of war with Iraq, and the Middle East policy office and the Office of Special Plans, both of which reported to Luti, produced analyses bolstering the U.S. case against Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein.

"Their analysis wasn't whether we should invade Iraq, but whether we should do it on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday," the former official said.

FBI investigators fear that Franklin — given his influential position and high-level security clearance — may have been in a position to compromise government information about Iraq and the U.S. war effort.

Sometime after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Franklin took a secret trip to Rome with Harold Rhode, another civilian official in the Pentagon, to meet with Iranian dissidents who reportedly promised to provide information to them that would aid the U.S.-declared war on terrorism.

One of the dissidents the pair spoke to was Manucher Ghorbanifar, an arms dealer and former Iranian spy who was a central figure in the Iran-Contra scandal of the 1980s.

The White House blessed the trip. Yet when news of the meeting leaked two years later, officials said they had not known that Ghorbanifar would be among the dissidents Franklin and Rhode met.

According to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, that meeting and a subsequent one between Rhode and Ghorbanifar "went nowhere."

Michael Ledeen, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington who specializes in Mideast affairs, arranged the contacts between the Pentagon officials and the Iranian dissidents, which he said led to American lives being saved in Afghanistan.

Asked Saturday for comment on the investigation, Ledeen said he expected the FBI probe to yield nothing incriminating about Franklin, whom Ledeen has known for years.

"I don't believe Larry Franklin would ever do anything improper with classified information," said Ledeen, who worked as a consultant to the National Security Council and the State and Defense departments during the administration of Ronald Reagan.

Ledeen said the information Franklin was suspected of transferring was well known among foreign policy observers. The U.S. had not developed a coherent Iran policy, he said, and the divergent views of various administration officials were publicly known and available.

"There is no American policy on Iran," Ledeen said. "What is he telling them? What can there possibly be that is classified about American policy on Iran that we do not know about from the public debate?"

Franklin and Rhode also have close ties with Iraqi politician Ahmad Chalabi, whose Iraqi National Congress was the dissident organization most favored by Pentagon officials during Hussein's rule.

Chalabi met often with top officials at the Pentagon and Vice President Dick Cheney's office to advocate regime change in Iraq.

Chalabi himself has been investigated by American officials in connection with the transmission of U.S. secrets to Iran. It is unclear whether the investigations into Franklin and Chalabi are connected.

Associated Press

Iran Claims Arrest of Nuclear Spies

31 August 2004

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran said Tuesday it had arrested a group of spies, including several who passed the country's nuclear secrets to the country's foes, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi did not name any of the arrested but said members of the Mujahedeen Khalq, an armed opposition group, were the main players in the spy operation.

"The Intelligence Ministry has arrested several spies who were transferring Iran's nuclear secrets out of the country," IRNA quoted Yunesi as saying. He provided no other details.

"The hypocrites (Mujahedeen) had the leading role in passing information (about Iran's nuclear facilities) and have already said they were proud of spying against Iran," Yunesi was quoted as saying.

The Mujahedeen Khalq claim they were the first to break a story in August 2003 that Iran was secretly developing a uranium enrichment plant in Natanz, central Iran.

But Tehran says it had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, about the Natanz facility months earlier. The IAEA has confirmed Tehran's version.

In Paris, Shahin Gobadi, a press spokesman of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, said that the individuals arrested had nothing to do with any disclosures made by the Iranian resistance.

"By resorting to such a hollow show of force, the mullahs are trying, on the one hand, to cover up their drive to acquire nuclear weapons and their violation of international treaties and, on the other hand, to compensate for the blows they have received from the resistance," said Gobadi, whose group calls itself an umbrella for the Iranian resistance movement but is believed to be the political arm of the Mujahedeen Khalq.

The Mujahedeen Khalq, which seeks to topple Iran's ruling Islamic establishment by force, remains on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist organizations.

However, fighters from the armed group are under U.S. military guard in neighboring Iraq and have been granted protection as noncombatants.

Iran has repeatedly said it would not give up its nuclear program, including the right to develop the full nuclear fuel cycle - from extracting uranium ore to enriching it to be used in nuclear reactors - but was ready to provide "guarantees" it won't build atomic weapons.

Washington claims the Iranian nuclear program is aimed at building atomic weapons, but Tehran says is directed at generating electricity.

Associated Press

Bush: Diplomacy Is Best Option With Iran

By Jennifer Loven - 31 August 2004

TAYLOR, Mich. - Calling war divisive for the country, President Bush said he will continue pursuing diplomatic rather than military options to try to get Iran to halt its nuclear program.

Earlier this month, Iran confirmed it had resumed building nuclear centrifuges, which can be used to enrich uranium to weapons grade, and declared it should have the right to advanced nuclear technology.

While he's "deeply concerned" by Iran's actions, Bush said diplomatic efforts are just beginning there and he's hopeful they will be successful. He noted military action to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq came only after more than a decade of failed diplomacy.

"The military option is always the last option for a president, not the first," he said in an interview broadcast Tuesday on NBC's "Today" show.

"Going to war is divisive," he said later in the interview. "I've always said my job is to confront problems, not to pass them on. The best thing I know to do is to continue to explain to people why the decisions I have made are going to make the world a more peaceful place."

Bush comments came as he continued a campaign swing that will take him to New York, where he'll speak Thursday night to the Republican National Convention.

Republicans are using this week to hail Bush's leadership in the war on terror before a public that has grown more skeptical about his presidency. But in the past several days, Bush has made a series of remarks that seem to undercut the message.

In a flurry of interviews timed to coincide with this week's convention, Bush acknowledged a "miscalculation" about what the United States would encounter in postwar Iraq after the fall of Saddam's regime and said the "catastrophic success" of a swift military victory there helped produce the still-potent insurgency.

Then, in an interview shown Monday on NBC, he suggested that the war on terror could not be won.

No matter that Bush's comments reflected just the kind of nuanced, deliberative thinking that Democratic challenger John Kerry has often said he is proud to display, but which has also gotten him into political hot water. Democrats wasted no time making the most of Bush's remarks.

"First George W. Bush said he miscalculated the war in Iraq, then he called it a catastrophic success and blamed the military," Kerry spokeswoman Allison Dobson said. "Now he says we can't win the war on terror. Is that what (chief Bush political strategist) Karl Rove means when he calls for steady leadership?"

"What if President Reagan had said that it may be difficult to win the war against communism? What if other presidents had said it'd be difficult to win the war - the Cold War?" Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards said on ABC's "Nightline" program. "The war on terrorism is absolutely winnable."

Bush's words sent aides scrambling to clarify, taking attention away from the carefully crafted convention and the president's appearances in one battleground state after another.

On Monday, as Bush campaigned in the battleground states of New Hampshire and Michigan, White House spokesman Scott McClellan said that what the president had meant was that the war on terror won't be won "in the conventional sense" with formal surrenders or treaties signed. He said Bush's statement was no different from others he made in the past.

The campaign professed not to be worried that the president had gone off-message.

"The American people have watched the president lead the war on terror decisively for three years," Bush-Cheney spokesman Steve Schmidt said. "The people of this country know what his leadership is."

But Bill Carrick, a California-based Democratic consultant, said the comments - even if they were merely unfortunately phrased expressions of mostly obvious truths - are politically dangerous because they speak to the very heart of the president's re-election pitch.

Carrick saw no hypocrisy in Democrats playing the issue, even though they have cried foul over similar attacks on Kerry. For instance, Vice President Dick Cheney criticized Kerry for saying he could fight "a more effective, more thoughtful, more strategic, more proactive, more sensitive war on terror" by singling out for mockery his use of the word "sensitive."

"Turnabout is fair play on this," Carrick said. "Exploit this to the hilt."

On Tuesday, Bush continues his pre-convention barnstorming, traveling to Nashville, Tenn., to speak to the national convention of the American Legion and to Alleman, Iowa, to attend a farm show. He ends the long day of campaigning in another crucial state, Pennsylvania, where he makes a late-evening appearance at a picnic before returning to Washington.

Kerry speaks Wednesday to the American Legion, the country's largest veterans' organization.

Evidence on Iran Called Unclear

IAEA Report on Nuclear Program Is Not Conclusive, Officials Say

by Dafna Linzer – 1 September 2004

U.N. inspectors have not uncovered definitive evidence that Iran has a clandestine nuclear weapons program, but they have been unable to clear up a series of suspicions and unanswered questions surrounding Tehran's activities, according to U.S. and Western diplomats who have been briefed on an upcoming International Atomic Energy Agency report.

The United States, which believes Iran could be three to five years away from completing a bomb in secret, shared intelligence tips with the IAEA in June, according to the diplomats, who agreed to discuss the classified information on the condition of anonymity.

Some of that information, including communications intercepts and satellite imagery, was followed up on by IAEA inspectors but did not lead to any discoveries. Several tips have yet to be fully explored and others were considered too vague, the diplomats said.

The IAEA's mixed report, which officials said will note improved cooperation from the Iranians in recent months, comes as the Bush administration is trying to make a case for stepping up pressure on the Islamic republic. Experts said the report's findings -- which could be made public as early as today -- will be a critical factor in that effort.

The United States lacks enough support from the IAEA's other 34 members to send the issue to the U.N. Security Council, which can assess international sanctions against Iran. But U.S. officials said they would continue to push for such an outcome.

Iran insists its program is peaceful and aimed at producing a stable energy source and has said it wants to avoid a showdown at the United Nations. Both sides are hoping the report will help sway board opinions.

"The report doesn't exonerate Iran, but it's not going to help get Iran to the Security Council, either," said David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, which recently revealed satellite photos of suspect sites that Iran leveled this year.

The IAEA is investigating those sites and other lines of inquiry, including Iran's relationship to a Pakistani scientist who ran a nuclear black market that was exposed last year.

Information regarding Abdul Qadeer Khan's shadowy network is expected to feature prominently in the IAEA's report. Inspectors recently determined that some samples of uranium found in Iran were brought in on contaminated equipment Tehran bought from the network. That finding help support Iran's earlier contention that the presence of uranium was caused by the tainted equipment, not by a secret program to enrich uranium for a bomb.

Among the areas still being pursued are questions related to Iran's potential nuclear weaponization activities, an inventory of equipment and materials purchases Iran made on the black market and the possibility that it could have obtained weapons designs similar to the ones Libya bought from the same network.

U.S. officials said they will emphasize those issues when it presses the IAEA board at a Sept. 13 meeting in Vienna to increase pressure on Tehran by referring the matter to the Security Council.

But they said much will depend on the position taken by Europe's three main powers -- France, Britain and Germany. Officials there have become deeply frustrated with Iran but are reluctant to take the matter to the council, a move Iran would perceive as a threat.

The three countries offered Iran incentives to give up suspicious aspects of its nuclear program. A deal was reached but fell apart in June after the IAEA reported that Iran wasn't fully cooperating with its inspectors.

Iran responded to the report and an angry rebuke by the IAEA's board by restarting the work it had suspended, including the construction of centrifuge equipment that could be used to enrich uranium.

The reaction was unexpected and hurt relations between Europe and Iran. Analysts said the tone of the next report will affect the possibility of talks between the two sides.

"If the IAEA says Iran is cooperating, then there is still an opening for the Europeans and others to work with them," said Shireen T. Hunter, an Iran specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "But if the report is critical and comes up with examples of poor cooperation or secret work, then obviously pressure will mount to send this to the United Nations."

Flynt Leverett, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center and a former staff member of the National Security Council in the Bush administration, said he doubts that Iran will be referred to the United Nations at this point.

"The administration's Iran policy right now on the nuclear issue is to get the Europeans fired up enough to go the council," Leverett said. "But short of a sighting of a mushroom cloud, I don't think there is anything in this report that can get the board to vote for a Security Council referral. I just don't think that's where the Europeans or the other people on the board are right now."

Guardian

Iran says it will resume uranium processing

by Ian Traynor – 2 September 2004

Iran has told UN nuclear inspectors that it is about to process dozens of tonnes of raw uranium into the gas which centrifuges can turn into nuclear bomb material, a disclosure certain to reinforce US arguments that Tehran has embarked on a secret atomic weapons programme.

A confidential report by Mohammed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, supplied to diplomats yesterday and obtained by the Guardian, says that Iran has recently told his inspectors that in "August/September" it would convert 37 tonnes of crude uranium into uranium hexafluoride - the gas spun at high speed through cascades of large centrifuges to be enriched, either to low levels for use as nuclear power station fuel, or to high levels for weapons purposes.

The news will encourage US-led hawks to seek to punish Iran for its alleged nuclear ambitions. The US undersecretary of state, John Bolton, said: "Iran's announcements are further strong evidence of the compelling need to take Iran's nuclear programme to the security council.

"The United States will continue to urge other members of the IAEA board of governors to join us in this effort, to deal with the Iranian threat to international peace and security," he added.

Iran agreed last year to freeze its enrichment programme.

More sceptical diplomats following the two-year mystery of its nuclear project said the Iranians were entitled under their international commitments to process the uranium, that they had notified the IAEA well in advance, and that there was no evidence of them enriching uranium to levels required for a weapon.

Mr ElBaradei's report is the prelude to a meeting of the IAEA's 35-strong board in two weeks.

In recent weeks the war of words between Tehran and the US and Israel on the nuclear issue has heated up. The European troika of Britain, France, and Germany, which has been trying to defuse the row, is also becoming more suspicious of Iranian intentions.

Yesterday Chris Patten, the EU's foreign relations commissioner, admitted that after more than a year of trying to engage with Tehran the policy had "gone backwards".

But the latest document from Mr ElBaradei is kind to the Iranians on several fronts.

It reports progress on a host of scientific and industrial issues, with the Iranians praised for providing access to sites and experts involved in the programme. Two previous areas of concern - laser enrichment activities and uranium conversion experiments - are now to be relegated to "routine" inspections.

"The agency continues to make progress in understanding the programme," the report says, but inspectors are not yet able to "draw definitive conclusions concerning the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations".

After months of mystery surrounding the traces of highly enriched uranium in samples taken from Iranian equipment, the report says Iran's claim that they originated on items bought on the black market is "plausible".

While the report confirms the resumption of some uranium enrichment operations, the inspectors have found no resumption of worrying activities at the main underground enrichment complex at Natanz, nor "any activities inconsistent with the agency's understanding of Iran's current suspension undertakings" at five other key sites.

Associated Press

U.S. Plans to Seek Sanctions Against Iran

by George Gedda – 2 September 2004

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State Colin Powell says the United States plans to press for a range of possible U.N. Security Council sanctions against Iran in response to what he describes as a concerted effort by that country to develop nuclear weapons.

Powell told reporters Wednesday night the United States will urge the United Nations' nuclear watchdog group on Sept. 13 in Vienna to refer the Iranian case to the U.N. Security Council for action.

"We're looking at the range of possible actions of a political, economic, diplomatic nature," Powell said.

He commented while flying home from Panama after attending the inauguration of Panamanian President Martin Torrijos.

In Vienna, the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency said earlier Wednesday that Iran plans to process tons of raw uranium and restart its centrifuges - two activities that could be used to make nuclear warheads.

U.S. diplomats at the meeting said the revelations provided further evidence that Iran's activities pose "a threat to international peace and security."

"Unless there are assurances that the international community can count on, I think it's appropriate that it (the Iran issue) be referred to the Security Council," Powell said.

He said it remains to be seen whether there is a consensus to do that now.

Diplomats said the IAEA report on Iran with the new disclosures was based on information provided by Iran's government. Iran insists its nuclear program is devoted to the peaceful generation of electricity.

Earlier Wednesday, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton, the administration's point man on nuclear proliferation threats, said, "We view with great concern" revelations in the IAEA report that Iran is about to convert 37 tons of yellow cake uranium into uranium hexafluoride gas.

Uranium hexafluoride is spun in centrifuges to produce enriched uranium, which in turn can be used to generate power or make nuclear warheads, depending on the degree of enrichment.

The United States will continue to urge other members of the U.N. agency's board of governors "to join with us in this effort to deal with the Iranian threat to international peace and security," Bolton said.

Another senior Bush administration official, in an interview in which his identity was withheld, said Iran was positioning itself to produce 220 pounds of enriched uranium, enough for four nuclear weapons.

U.N. inspectors have been looking for evidence that Iran has a secret nuclear weapons program. Such a finding could be critical to the Bush administration's effort to gain support from the other 34 members of the agency to seek U.N. Security Council action.

Tom Casey, a State Department spokesman, said the report being circulated by the IAEA "continues to document the fact that through the past 18 years Iran has amassed a record of deception and denial about its nuclear activities."

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry's campaign criticized the Bush administration for going to war against Iraq on what it called discredited grounds instead of acting sooner to marshal U.S. allies to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

The IAEA report shows "a leading state sponsor of terrorism is yet another step closer to nuclear weapons capability," said Susan Rice, Kerry's senior national security adviser. "Yet the Bush administration has stood on the sidelines while this nuclear program has advanced. ... It is past time for this administration to develop a tough and effective strategy for dealing with Iran."

Los Angeles Times

Iran to Convert Uranium Batch

by Douglas Frantz – 2 September 2004

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Iran plans to convert 37 tons of uranium into a substance that could be used to manufacture nuclear weapons, the United Nations nuclear watchdog agency said in a report Wednesday.

Although the Iranian plans do not violate nonproliferation regulations because the material also has peaceful uses, they immediately stoked concern in Washington about the aims of Tehran's ambitious nuclear program.

"Iran's announcements are further strong evidence of the compelling need to take Iran's nuclear program to the Security Council," said U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton, who called Iran's nuclear efforts a "threat to international peace and security."

Iran's intentions were disclosed in a confidential report prepared by the International Atomic Energy Agency that was obtained by the Los Angeles Times.

Iran insists that its nuclear program is intended solely to generate electricity. The United States has repeatedly accused Tehran of concealing a weapons program behind a civilian facade.

In its sixth report on the Iranian program, the atomic agency gave it mixed marks. It praised Iran for cooperating on many fronts, but said key aspects of its nuclear activities were still unclear because of missing information.

The two primary areas of concern are the sources of uranium contamination found at four locations during the last year in Iran and the extent of the country's efforts to develop advanced centrifuges for turning uranium gas into enriched uranium, which can be used in weapons or to fuel civilian reactors.

The report provided explanations for traces of weapons-grade uranium discovered at a huge enrichment plant under construction near the central Iranian city of Natanz and at a formerly secret facility outside Tehran known as Kalaye Electric Co.

The IAEA report said Iran's statement that the contamination came from components bought from another country was "plausible." It also said there was no indication that Iran had tried to produce weapons-grade uranium at those two locations.

The country that supplied the contaminated components was not named in the report, but diplomats familiar with the inquiry confirmed that it was Pakistan. They said Pakistan had provided samples of enriched uranium that matched some of the traces found at Natanz and Kalaye.

However, the atomic agency was still investigating other possible sources of the highly enriched uranium and lower-grade uranium traces, the report said, leaving open the possibility that Iran enriched uranium itself at other locations, said a Western diplomat who reviewed the document.

"The IAEA still needs more cooperation from other states, mainly Pakistan, to determine whether Iran enriched its own uranium," the diplomat said in a telephone interview from Vienna, where the agency is based.

Hamid Reza Asefi, the spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry, issued a statement in Tehran acknowledging that some questions remained about the nuclear program. But he said they would be resolved soon.

The latest report was circulated among diplomats Wednesday and will be debated next week when the agency's board of governors meets in Vienna.

Jon B. Wolfsthal, a nonproliferation expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said the IAEA had not found proof that Iran was operating a secret weapons program, but he said long-range concerns remained.

"Iran still has an active nuclear program that will give it the ability to make weapons if it wants," Wolfsthal said.

Diplomats in Vienna said the United States probably would point to Iran's ambitious uranium conversion plans as evidence of the need for tougher steps to restrict its nuclear program.

The IAEA report said Iranian officials had told the agency this summer that they were planning to convert 37 tons of yellowcake, or milled uranium, into uranium hexafluoride gas. Experts said the gas could be used to produce enough highly enriched uranium for several nuclear bombs or to fuel civilian reactors.

Iran, which has the right to enrich the uranium, said it plans to conduct the tests under IAEA supervision.

The Western diplomat speculated that Iran was using the threat of an industrial-size conversion to persuade Britain, France and Germany to fulfill promises made last year to share advanced nuclear technology.

The European countries agreed to provide the technology in exchange for Iran's pledge to stop enriching uranium and halt production of centrifuges, machines that spin uranium hexafluoride into enriched uranium for weapons or power plants.

Iran reneged this summer on its pledge not to produce centrifuges, and the plan to convert yellowcake could increase pressure on the European countries to start either sharing technology or getting tougher with Tehran, diplomats said.

Undersecretary Bolton said the U.S. viewed "with great concern the IAEA report that Iran is about to convert 37 tons of yellowcake uranium into uranium hexafluoride gas."

Boston Globe

Key EU powers weigh bringing Iran nuclear issue to UN panel

by Paul Taylor – 4 September 2004

VALKENBURG, the Netherlands -- Major European powers were discussing yesterday whether to take Iran to the UN Security Council amid frustration at its failure to cooperate fully with UN efforts to make sure it is not secretly trying to develop atomic weapons.

Diplomats said that despite gloom over Iran's lack of transparency, most European Union states opposed escalating the issue to the Security Council for the moment.

Britain and Germany, which with France have tried to coax Tehran into halting uranium enrichment and complying fully with its treaty obligations, said the idea of referring Iran to the Security Council for possible sanctions was under review.

"We have all been perplexed and saddened that the Iranian government has not completed all the tasks it said it would," said Jack Straw, Britain's foreign secretary.

Asked about US pressure on Britain, France, and Germany to join in bringing Iran before the Security Council, he said, "That . . . is an issue which is currently being discussed amongst the EU3 and with other partners, and I'm not going to anticipate the decision there."

Washington accuses Iran of seeking nuclear weapons, while the oil-producing Islamic Republic insists its program is purely for peaceful purposes.

Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of Germany said Iran was only partially fulfilling its pledges to the EU3 and there was a danger it would miscalculate.

Asked whether Tehran should be taken to the Security Council, he said, "That could become a subject, but the consequences of all these steps have to be very carefully considered."

The EU ministers unanimously agreed there should be no more nuclear powers in the world and Iran must cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

"We want to send out a very strong signal that we mean business," said Foreign Minister Bernard Bot of the Netherlands, who chaired the meeting.

Straw said the latest report by the IAEA, the UN nuclear watchdog, contained "clear reservations" about the nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Several diplomats in Vienna said the European trio were preparing to draft a resolution to be presented to the IAEA board of governors when it begins meeting Sept. 13.

"The idea would be to balance skepticism about Iran's nuclear program with criticism of their behavior," a diplomat on the 35-member board said.

US Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton said: "There comes a point when you have to say the nuclear nonproliferation treaty is going to be left in shreds and tatters if we don't do something about the Iranians."

Guardian

UK sets Iran deadline to end nuclear bomb work

by Ewen MacAskill, Kasra Naji and Chris McGreal – 9 September 2004

The British government yesterday set a November ultimatum for Iran to suspend all activities linked to production of a nuclear bomb - a deadline that effectively marks the failure of more than a year of negotiations between Tehran and the European troika of Britain, France and Germany.

Refusal by Iran to comply would produce a new Middle East crisis in which the issue would almost certainly be referred to the United Nations security council, which could opt for punitive action.

Although the deadline is designed to pile pressure on Iran, the early signs from Tehran are that the theocratic regime is unwilling to comply unconditionally and that it is seeking major concessions from the west in return, including a trade agreement and transfer of civil nuclear technology.

A British official said yesterday that Iran must comply by the November board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN watchdog body.

"Iran needs to meet its commitments. We would like it to meet its commitments before then, but if it doesn't, Iran needs to know and it needs to know now, that there is going to be a decision point in November and at that point a very serious option ... is referral to the United Nations security council," he said.

"We cannot have any kind of negotiation that goes on forever. At some point you have got to decide whether negotiating further makes sense, or whether you need to do something else."

The new position was agreed by British, French and German foreign ministers at a meeting in the Netherlands at the weekend.

The German chancellor, Gerhard Schröder, yesterday warned that Iran's nuclear activities were "extremely alarming" and the German foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, described the prospect of a nuclear arms race in the Middle East as the "nightmare scenario".

Israel is the only Middle East country with the nuclear bomb.

A French government source echoed the British and German positions, saying that Iran had reneged on commitments it had given to the European trio in Tehran last year.

The US, Israel and the Europeans all claim Iran is covertly engaged in building a nuclear weapon.

Tehran denies the accusation, insisting its nuclear programme is purely for the production of electricity. The European countries' new position brings them closer to the US, which is hawkish on Iran and has long expressed scepticism about the European policy of "constructive engagement".

If the security council opted for punitive action, the likeliest course of action would be sanctions.

But senior members of the US administration have in recent months threatened Iran with more serious options, including covert military operations, and Israel has warned it could mount a pre-emptive strike against an Iranian nuclear reactor.

An Iranian source said this week that the Bushehr plant in southern Iran, being built with Russian help since the early 1990s, was scheduled for completion within the next two years.

At a meeting in Vienna on Monday, the IAEA board is expected to reiterate continued concern over Iran's intentions.

Iran this week offered some concessions ahead of the IAEA meeting. But the British official said they were late and were neither clear, nor had been formally put forward.

In a statement, Iran's defence minister, Ali Shamkhani, said yesterday that "Iran will not achieve peace by giving concessions".

On Tuesday, Mr Shamkhani suggested test-firing Iran's nuclear-capable medium-range missile Shahab 3 in front of observers, after press reports abroad suggested that an August 11 test may not have been as successful as Iranian officials had claimed. The missile is capable of reaching Israel.

In an interview with the Jerusalem Post published yesterday, the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, urged the security council to impose sanctions.

Mr Sharon said he has no doubt Iran was trying to develop nuclear weapons.

"That is their intention, and they are doing it by deception and subterfuge, using this cover or that. This is completely clear," he said. "I don't see that [international pressure] against them is enough to stop them from obtaining nuclear weapons. And that is a very big danger."

Mr Sharon added that Israel was "taking measures to defend itself".

AFP

US gives up on getting Iran to UN Security Council in September: US official

11 September 2004

The United States now realizes that it does not have the majority it needs at the UN nuclear watchdog to bring Iran before the UN Security Council over Tehran's alleged atomic weapons program, a US official told AFP.

"We recognize we are not going to get majority support for a non-compliance finding (to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) in September" at the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) 35-nation board of governors meeting in Vienna that begins Monday, a US state department official told AFP by phone from Washington.

The official said US Under Secretary of State for arms control and international security John Bolton was now talking in Geneva with European diplomats "about a trigger mechanism" to effectively set a deadline for Iran ahead of the following IAEA board meeting in November.

The trigger could be "to require that Iran suspend immediately and fully all uranium enrichment-related work" or "for Iran to grant complete, immediate, unrestricted access to whatever locations the IAEA deems necessary" or for Iran to provide by a certain date, such as October 31, "full information on all imported materials and components relevant to the P1 and P2 centrifuge program," the official said.

Uranium can be enriched through centrifuges into a highly refined form that can be used as fuel for civilian reactors or to make an atomic bomb.

Europe's three main countries -- Britain, France and Germany -- are against taking Iran to the Security Council as they stress cooperating with Tehran to get it to come clean about its program.

But diplomats said the three countries were now backing the US call for Iran to fully suspend enrichment, including the first step of converting mineral uranium yellowcake into the gas that is the feedstock for making the enriched uranium that can be used in bombs.

A "tactical gap" between Washington and the European countries was narrowing but "we have a ways to go," Bolton told a news conference in Geneva, following a US-hosted meeting with his counterparts from the other Group of Eight (G8) industrialized countries.

"The objective that the United States has been pursuing has been to ensure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapons capability and that is an objective shared by all of the G-8 countries," Bolton said.

"There is no disagreement on our broad objective. What we have tried to do here today and yesterday was to close the tactical gap that has existed between the United States and ... Britain France and Germany," he said.

"We made progress in that regard here ... I think discussions will continue over the weekend and into next week and we will see what we are able to do."

The US envoy declined, however, to say exactly what advances had been made.

"I do not want to really get into the specifics because the questions of closing the tactical gap I think are best addressed in private consultations," he said, adding that emails and telephone calls would follow Friday's talks.

The United States and the Euro 3 are separately preparing resolutions for Monday's IAEA meeting in Vienna.

Iran's controversial bid to generate nuclear power at its Bushehr plant is seen by arch-enemies Israel and the United States as a cover for nuclear weapons development, allegations that Iran denies.

Government officials from the G8 countries -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States -- as well as other nations met in Geneva on Thursday to discuss non-proliferation issues.

VOANews

US: Iranian Nuclear Program May Come Before UN Security Council

by Michael Bowman – 12 September 2004

Secretary of State Colin Powell says the United Nations Security Council may ultimately have to deal with questions surrounding Iran's nuclear program. Mr. Powell spoke after Iran once again rejected international demands to abandon its uranium enrichment program.

Iran's rebuff of a European demand to suspend nuclear activities came on the eve of a planned meeting by the International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors to consider Iran's failure to fully declare its nuclear activities.

Speaking on the ABC television program, This Week, Mr. Powell said the international community must insist that Iran declare its full nuclear intent.

"At what point do we say to the Iranians that this [nuclear issue] is now a matter for the entire United Nations Security Council to deal with?" he asked. "The Iranians are under enormous pressure, and every day or so they say, 'It [the nuclear program] is only peaceful, and we are willing to give assurances.' We [the United States] are the ones who called attention to this problem and said that the international community has to do something about it."

Iran has long maintained that its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes, to generate energy to meet the demands of an expanding population, and that its program is permissible under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

But the IAEA, the United States and European nations have been dissatisfied with Iran's assurances to date, as well as its compliance with previous agreements. Speaking on CNN's Late Edition program, a key U.S. lawmaker, Florida Senator Bob Graham, said the international community cannot tolerate a nuclear-armed Iran, which he argued would set off an arms race throughout the region.

"To have a country in the middle of the Middle East with nuclear capacity is almost assuredly going to cause nervousness among other countries and a desire by them to develop nuclear weapons," he said.

Asked if the United States would consider a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice said President Bush is not ruling out any possible courses of action. But, also speaking on CNN's Late Edition, she stressed that the administration wants to resolve the issue peacefully.

"We believe that this is something that is best resolved by diplomatic means, and that can be resolved by diplomatic means. The world is united in saying to the Iranians that it is not acceptable for them, under cover of a civilian nuclear program, to engage in activities that might allow them to build a military program," she added.

U.S. diplomats have been working with their counterparts from Britain, France and Germany to reach a common position on whether, as the United States has maintained, an IAEA deadline for Iranian disclosures should stipulate U.N. Security Council involvement, in the event of non-compliance

Iran rejects EU call to abandon uranium project

by Ian Traynor – 13 September 2004

Iran yesterday flatly rejected demands to abandon its uranium enrichment programme, as a leading hawk in the Bush administration warned that America would act to prevent Tehran obtaining nuclear weapons.

The escalation came as France, Germany and Britain joined forces with Washington for the first time to demand a halt to Iran's fuel enrichment work, signalling possible sanctions unless the Islamic republic pledges to abandon the activity by November.

On the eve of an important board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, starting in Vienna today, Britain, France, and Germany have drafted a board resolution on Iran demanding concrete action and answers by November. The draft resolution also asks the IAEA to deliver a final verdict on Iran's nuclear programme.

The draft threatens "probable further steps", which means referring the country to the UN security council for reprimand and penalties if Tehran fails to persuade the IAEA that it is not working on a covert nuclear weapons programme.

Iran responded by rejecting the key demand contained in the European draft - that its ambitious uranium enrichment programme be ditched. The Washington hawk dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue, meanwhile, said the US would act, if need be, to stop Tehran obtaining nuclear weapons.

John Bolton, the Republican "neo-con" who is in charge of nuclear counter-proliferation at the US state department, told journalists in Jerusalem: "We are determined that they [Iran] are not going to achieve a nuclear weapons capability".

Last Friday in Geneva, Mr Bolton helped to draft the EU troika's resolution, which sees a narrowing of transatlantic differences over how to deal with Iran.

During 18 months of IAEA deliberations on and investigation of the Iranian nuclear conundrum, Washington has been pressing for tough action against Tehran, while the European trio preferred negotiations with the Islamic republic.

The EU draft confirms that European patience with Iran has run out and the window for negotiations is closing.

A British official said last week that the crunch point for deciding how to act on Iran would arrive in November, when the next IAEA board meeting is scheduled, soon after the US election.

While there are a host of questions regularly being raised about Iran's 20-year-old nuclear programme, which was largely unknown until two years ago, the fundamental aim of the Europeans and the Americans is to close down the extensive programme for enriching uranium, an industrial process that would give Iran the ability to produce bomb-grade nuclear fuel.

Iran insists that its programme is peaceful. Under its international treaty commitments, it is entitled to develop a homegrown nuclear fuel cycle, from mining uranium ore to processing it into uranium hexafluoride gas, to feeding the gas into cascades of thousands of centrifuges, then spinning the gas to low levels of enrichment to enable its use for electricity generation in nuclear power plants.

The same technology, however, can be used to enrich the uranium to much higher levels for use in nuclear warheads.

Because of this, Iran needs to declare its activities to the IAEA, and it failed to do so until it was found out 18 months ago.

Tehran yesterday rejected the central demand of the European draft resolution - to abandon its uranium enrichment programme - and declared that it had already perfected the technology.

New Zealand Herald

EU trio toughen stance on Iran nuke plan - diplomats

13 September 2004

VIENNA - France, Britain and Germany have toughened their stance on Iran's nuclear programme, demanding that Tehran halt all parts of the atomic fuel cycle that can be used to make a bomb, Western diplomats said.

Western diplomats said that unless Iran satisfies the European Union's "big three" and verifiably halts its uranium conversion and enrichment programmes, it would probably be reported to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

The United States accuses Iran of pursuing nuclear weapons under cover of a civilian power programme and has called on the Europeans to stop negotiating with Tehran and back a US plan to report it to the Security Council for concealing potentially weapons-related nuclear activities for nearly two decades.

Iran denies pursuing atomic weapons, insisting its nuclear ambitions are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity.

Talks between Iranian officials and the UN nuclear watchdog ahead of Monday's key meeting at the agency's Vienna headquarters had produced no agreement by Friday afternoon and diplomats said it was unclear whether any would be reached.

"It's by no means certain that there will be a deal," a Western diplomat close to the IAEA told Reuters. He said that the IAEA and the EU trio had made their position clear and it was now up to the Iranians to say yes or no.

On Tuesday, diplomats said Iran had agreed in principle to suspend its uranium enrichment programme -- a suspension it had promised in October 2003. The major sticking point now is Iran's refusal to accept EU demands that it abandon uranium conversion.

"Iran says that uranium conversion was never part of the original suspension agreement," a diplomat in Vienna said.

One diplomat said hawkish US Under Secretary of State John Bolton would discuss Iran with his three EU counterparts on the sidelines of the G8 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland.

The EU trio hope to submit a resolution to the IAEA board meeting next week that stops short of reporting Iran to the Security Council for violating the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But they are waiting for Iran's response on the suspension before circulating anything, diplomats said.

One diplomat said Iran had made agreement to the European terms for suspending its fuel cycle activities conditional "upon the inclusion of certain language in the resolution". It was unclear what that language would be.

Associated Press

U.S. and Europe Differ on Iran Strategy

by George Jahn – 14 September 2004

VIENNA, Austria - A U.S.-European rift surfaced Tuesday over how harshly to deal with Iran and its suspect nuclear program, with the Europeans ignoring American suggestions and circulating their own recommendations to other delegates at a key meeting of the U.N. atomic agency.

Diplomats at a board of governors meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency had suggested earlier that the United States and the European Union were making progress in drafting common language for a resolution that would set a deadline for Iran to meet demands designed to dispel fears it was trying to make nuclear arms.

But the latest draft, obtained by The Associated Press and being circulated informally Tuesday for reaction from other delegations, was nearly exactly the one that France, Britain and Germany came up with Friday — a text that U.S. officials had said would be unacceptable.

The American suggestions also were made available to the AP. They demand Iran grant agency inspectors "complete, immediate and unrestricted access;" provide "full information" about past illegal nuclear activities; suspend "immediately and fully" uranium enrichment and related activities; and meet all agency demands to "resolve all outstanding issues" nurturing suspicions of a possible weapons program.

The IAEA meeting has become the main battleground between Iran and Washington, which wants to take Iran before the U.N. Security Council for alleged violations of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The Americans asked the draft include an Oct. 31 deadline. The EU text remained vaguer in demands and in a time frame, asking only that IAEA director general Mohamed ElBaradei submit a comprehensive report before November for evaluation by the board.

ElBaradei shrugged off the idea of a deadline.

"We cannot just say there is a magic date," for an end to his agency's Iran probe, he said. He also repeated that his investigation has not definitely established whether Iran is trying to make nuclear arms — as Washington asserts.

"We haven't seen any concrete proof that there is a weapons program," ElBaradei told reporters on the second day of the board meeting. "Can we say everything is peaceful? Obviously we are not at that stage."

Revelations of the rift were expected to prove embarrassing to the Americans. They had expressed confidence they would be able to win over the Europeans and had flown in a team close to U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton for the board meeting — effectively sidelining the Vienna-based U.S. mission that usually handles such conferences.

The Americans "introduced amendments that were beyond what the market would bear," said one senior Western diplomat who tracks the IAEA. "The European draft is right now going to have support."

Bolton, the U.S. point-man on nuclear nonproliferation, is considered tough on Iran by most European delegations at the board meeting in the Austrian capital. The diplomat suggested the Washington team "doesn't perhaps have a good sense of what the Vienna audience can accept."

A diplomat representing one of the 25 EU countries said part of the problem was that the Americans came in with modifications after the European Union thought they were happy with the original draft written by France, Germany and Britain.

"We thought we had something with the Americans and they came in with further amendments," said the diplomat, who, like others, spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The diplomats acknowledged the draft was still far from any final version being prepared for formal introduction to the board and said it may well include some of the American suggestions.

But they said the tone of some of the U.S. demands — and delays in presenting them — meant that a final resolution on Iran would not come before close to the end of the week. They also held open the possibility that Europe and the United States might not be able to bridge their differences, a development that would be unprecedented since the U.N. watchdog started looking at Iran's nuclear dossier two years ago.

Indirectly exploiting the U.S.-European differences, Iran on Tuesday warned against attempts to force it to freeze uranium enrichment, with a senior envoy asserting his country had a right to what Washington claims is a key component of a secret nuclear weapons program.

"Nothing should be imposed against (Iran's) legitimate right" to enrich uranium, Hossein Mousavian, Iran's chief IAEA delegate told AP.

Mousavian suggested his country's ratification of an agreement with the IAEA that would commit it to giving agency inspectors fuller and faster access to nuclear sites and files could be jeopardized if the board agrees on a deadline on enrichment.

Iran has been acting as if the agreement were already in force but has held off ratification in parliament. Mousavian said lawmakers would be "very concerned" if the deadline were imposed.

Iran is not prohibited from enrichment under its obligations to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, but Tehran has faced mounting international pressure to suspend the technology — which can be used both to make nuclear arms or generate electricity — as a gesture to dispel suspicions it is interested in making weapons.

Last week, Iran confirmed an IAEA report that it planned to convert more than 40 tons of raw uranium into uranium hexafluoride, the feed stock for enrichment.

New York Times

U.S. Seeks Tougher Tone in Resolution on Iran's Nuclear Program

by Craig S. Smith – 14 September 2004

VIENNA, Sept. 13 - The United States lobbied Monday to toughen an International Atomic Energy Agency draft resolution on Iran's nuclear program, hoping to include a clear "trigger" that would send Iran's case to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions if the country fails to comply with I.A.E.A. demands by November.

The proposed resolution, prepared by Britain, France and Germany, gives Iran a November deadline to clarify inconsistencies in its nuclear energy program, suspected of masking efforts to build a bomb. But it falls short of setting specific requirements or explicitly threatening to send the case to the Security Council.

Nonetheless, the draft resolution is the toughest yet in a yearlong effort to persuade Iran to cooperate more fully with the United Nations nuclear agency and shows a shift in Europe's attitude toward Iran. The three European countries have in the past resisted American pressure to deliver a harsher rebuke to Iran.

"The Europeans are taking a very hard line now," said a European diplomat involved in the negotiations who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Iran warned Monday that it might resume efforts to produce highly enriched uranium that could be used to build a nuclear bomb if the United Nations continues pressuring it over its nuclear program. In March, Iran voluntarily agreed to suspend them.

"We can't imagine that the suspension will last very long," Hossein Mousavian, head of the Iranian delegation, told reporters at the I.A.E.A. headquarters here. He reiterated Iran's stance that under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty it has the right to produce fuel for nuclear reactors.

The United States and other countries, however, have long pointed to inconsistencies in Iran's program.

Despite the suspension Iran promised in March, it has never halted the manufacture of centrifuge parts by private workshops. This month, Iran said it planned to convert about 40 tons of "yellow cake" uranium into uranium hexafluoride gas, the raw material for centrifuge enrichment. Nuclear experts warned that the quantity involved was sufficient to produce fuel for several bombs.

The draft resolution circulated by the three European countries calls on the I.A.E.A. chief, Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, to produce a full report on Iran's nuclear activities before the next meeting of the agency's board of governors. It states that on the basis of that report, the board will make "a definitive determination on whether or not further steps are required."

Everyone involved understands that those "further steps" include referral to the Security Council, which could lead to sanctions against Iran. The United States, which has lobbied for tougher action against Iran since details of its clandestine nuclear program were disclosed last year, is working to harden the resolution's language further and to include a clear trigger for action in November by giving Iran a list of requirements, like a comprehensive suspension of enrichment activity, that it must fulfill before then.

In Washington, a senior Bush administration official said the United States would still like the I.A.E.A. to refer the issue to the Security Council this month, rather than wait until November. But European diplomats say that the United States has little choice, because there are not the votes on agency's board of governors for a quicker referral.

Once the United States and the three European countries have agreed on the draft, the resolution will be submitted to the board for approval this week. The board can call for a vote, but resolutions are usually approved by consensus to avoid politicizing the agency's decisions.

Iran, which is not on the 35-member board, is negotiating with Britain, France and Germany to soften the resolution in return for renewed commitments on suspending some of its activities.

Iran continues to insist that its nuclear program is for purely peaceful purposes. But the discovery two years ago that its program was much broader than it had disclosed to the United Nations agency and contained inadequately explained irregularities have convinced the United States that the oil-rich country's goal is not to produce cheap energy but to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Some Iranian equipment, for example, was found to be contaminated with weapons-grade uranium, and Iran had worked on producing polonium 210, a radioactive isotope that can help set off a nuclear explosion.

"There's a whole host of activities that in our opinion don't have anything to do with putting electricity into a light bulb," one Western official said.

Meanwhile, Dr. ElBaradei gave the board additional information on South Korea's secret nuclear experiments, disclosed this month, calling them "a matter of serious concern."

He said that South Korea had produced about 330 pounds of "natural uranium metal" at three secret facilities in the 1980's and that some of the metal was used in laser-based enrichment experiments in 2000 to produce a small amount of enriched uranium.

The disclosure suggests that South Korea's nuclear experiments had a longer history than previously thought, though South Korea contends that rogue scientists were responsible. Dr. ElBaradei said he would deliver a fuller report on South Korea in November.

Financial Times

US ready to seek UN sanctions against Iran

By Guy Dinmore in Washington and Daniel Dombey in Brussels – 14 September 2004

The US is drawing up proposals for United Nations sanctions against Iran aimed at stopping its suspected nuclear weapons programme, according to US and European officials.

At talks this week in Vienna, the US is pushing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to adopt a resolution that would give Iran a deadline of October 31 to satisfy the concerns of the UN nuclear watchdog or be referred to the UN Security Council.

European negotiators are resisting referral and want to give the process more time. EU officials said talk of sanctions was premature.

A US official and European diplomats said the US proposals, which have been discussed but not formally presented, envisage as a first step a condemnation and warning by the Security Council president.

Iran would be given more time to comply or face nuclear-related sanctions that would, for example, break off Russia's co-operation in building a civilian nuclear power plant at Bushehr in southern Iran. Broader economic sanctions could follow.

The US already has a trade embargo of its own against Iran, but has repeatedly failed to persuade the European Union to drop its policy of engagement and follow the US line of containment and isolation.

In private, US officials express frustration with the European approach. One official said the IAEA board meeting was likely to "kick the can down the road" even though the EU agreed with the US that Iran intended to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the IAEA, appeared to be straddling both positions yesterday. He said his agency had no proof of a weapons programme in Iran, nor of undeclared uranium enrichment.

"But are we in a position to say that everything is peaceful? Obviously we are not at this stage," he added.

The EU3 - Britain, France and Germany - want Iran to return to the commitment it made last year to suspend its uranium enrichment activities. Bush administration hardliners want Iran to give up its entire nuclear programme. Iran denies having a weapons programme but has threatened to resume its uranium enrichment activities. It has also proposed to the EU a comprehensive, 10-point deal that would also cover weapons of mass destruction, al-Qaeda suspects detained in Iran, human rights and regional security.

Diplomats said such a package would have to involve the US, which has refused to deal directly with Tehran for over a year.

EU officials maintain that the 25-member bloc, which will next discuss the issue at an October meeting, is nowhere near sanctions.

The Non-Proliferation Policy Education Center, headed by Henry Sokolski, a former US official, said the US government should seek to limit the potential harm Iran might do if it gained nuclear weapons.

Reuters

New Satellite Photos May Show New Iran Nuclear Site

by Carol Giacomo – 15 September 2004

WASHINGTON - New satellite images show Iran's Parchin military complex, southeast of Tehran, may be a site for research, testing and production of nuclear weapons, a nuclear expert said on Wednesday.

David Albright of the Institute for Science and International Security, a think tank, released an analysis of the photos and told Reuters they show the site "has a potential that would warrant (U.N. inspectors) going there" to determine the exact nature of the operation.

"Based on a review of overhead imagery of this site ... (it) is a logical candidate for a nuclear weapons-related site, particularly one involved in researching and developing high explosive components for an implosion-type nuclear weapon," he added in an analysis posted on the ISIS Web site.

The actual satellite photos were also shown by ABC Television on Wednesday's "Nightly News."

The United States has long accused Iran of aggressively pursuing a nuclear weapons program but Tehran insists its efforts are aimed at developing peaceful nuclear energy.

In his Web site analysis, Albright, a physicist who has worked as a weapons inspector, said:

"The evidence that this (Parchin military) site is conducting nuclear weapons work is ambiguous" and "some facilities (in the complex) seem more suited to armaments research or rocket motor testing."

But he told ABC: "It's the first case where we're looking at a set of facilities that could be used in making the nuclear weapon itself."

Albright told Reuters that the U.N. watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, asked Iranian officials if its inspectors could visit the site but the request was ignored by Tehran.

He said he hoped the publicity generated by release of the satellite photos would increase pressure on Iran to let IAEA inspectors into the site.

Albright said the Parchin complex is owned by Iran's military industry and has hundreds of buildings and test sites.

"Within this larger complex, there is an isolated separately secured site which may be involved in developing nuclear weapons," the analysis on his Web site reported.

After hiding its nuclear activities for 18 years, Iran last year promised France, Britain and Germany it would fully suspend enrichment as a confidence building measure, along with all related activities.

Although Iran has not carried out enrichment, it has annoyed the Europeans by continuing to build centrifuges designed for that purpose.

In Vienna on Wednesday, U.S. and European negotiators moved closer to a deal on a resolution on Iran's nuclear program that could trigger a November showdown.

Diplomats said the negotiators haggled over the wording of the latest draft that would set an Oct. 31 deadline for Iran to eliminate fears it has a covert atom bomb program.

Associated Press

Iranian Freeze on Uranium About to End

by George Jahn – 15 September 2004

VIENNA, Austria - A senior Iranian envoy suggested Wednesday that Tehran's partial yearlong freeze on uranium enrichment is about to end, shrugging off U.S. and European pressure to renounce the process and end fears that his country wants to make nuclear arms.

Both Washington and the European Union want a commitment from Iran to stop enrichment and have been working on a resolution to be adopted at an International Atomic Energy Agency meeting demanding that Tehran agree to such a freeze.

But they differ on the firmness of the wording of a resolution, with the United States seeking European support to have Iran hauled before the U.N. Security Council if it defies conditions meant to dispel suspicions about its nuclear agenda.

Hossein Mousavian, Iran's chief envoy to the meeting, suggested Iran was not about to cave in to threats of Security Council action, which could lead to sanctions.

"I think one year is enough," he told The Associated Press, when asked if his country would agree to extend a commitment to suspend enrichment that it made last October. Mousavian did not name a date for a resumption of enrichment, but suggested it could be "a few months" away.

Deep U.S.-European differences on the wording of the draft resolution persisted into Wednesday, leading to an adjournment of the meeting of the IAEA's board of governors until Friday to allow back-room negotiations and consultations with capitals.

Still, copies of both the U.S. and European drafts — made available in full to The Associated Press — showed both sides favoring some kind of deadline for Iran to commit to a new freeze on enrichment — and at least an implicit threat of referral to the Security Council if Tehran remained defiant.

Iran is not prohibited from enrichment under its obligations to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty but has faced mounting international pressure to suspend the technology — which can be used both to make nuclear arms and generate electricity — as a gesture to dispel suspicions it is interested in making weapons.

Last week, Iran confirmed an IAEA report that it planned to convert more than 40 tons of raw uranium into uranium hexafluoride, the feed stock for enrichment.

Even before that, international concerns grew because of perceptions that a suspension of enrichment and related activities was never fully enacted and had eroded since Tehran's pledge a year ago.

An IAEA report has given Iran some good marks for cooperation with the most recent phase of an agency probe into nearly two decades of covert nuclear activities that came to light only two years ago. But the report also said Iran must do more to banish all suspicions it harbors nuclear weapons ambitions.

Mousavian referred to that report in arguing there was no need to demand a further freeze.

"All major necessary confidence-building measures have been taken by Iran, and today the agency has full control and supervision," he said. "That's why we believe that (a) one year suspension is good enough."

Mousavian downplayed the significance of U.S.-European differences on the language of any resolution, suggesting the rift was more over style than substance.

"They have the same opinion, but the Americans are in a hurry for a harsh decision and the Europeans believe in dialogue," he said.

That view was echoed by former President Hashemi Rafsanjani, the closest figure to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and head of the Expediency Council, a powerful arbitrating body within the ruling establishment.

"America and the Europeans follow the same objective: denying Iran mastery over nuclear technology," Rafsanjani told state television. "The Americans say that impudently, while Europeans say (it) diplomatically."

Among the differences were on a deadline. The Americans asked that the draft call on Iran to meet demands by Oct. 31. The EU text remained more vague, asking only that IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei submit a comprehensive report before November for evaluation by the board.

News International Pakistan

US wants compromise with Iran but sticks to hard line

16 September 2004

VIENNA: The United States on Wednesday presented key EU states with a softened version of an ultimatum over Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program but diplomats said the text was still too strong to win approval at the UN atomic agency's meeting in Vienna.

"We're hoping we've found ground for compromise," a US diplomat said of the amendments submitted along with Canada and Australia to a draft resolution presented by Britain, France and Germany.

But a Western diplomat close to the talks told AFP the new proposal was "not a major break from previous drafts" presented by the Americans.

Another diplomat said close US ally Britain was "flummoxed" by the continuing US hard line.

The United States, which accuses Iran of secretly developing nuclear weapons, wants the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to end a 19-month probe of Tehran's atomic program and bring the Islamic Republic before the UN Security Council.

In talks over a resolution that have paralysed the IAEA's board of governors meeting in Vienna this week, Washington dropped demands for IAEA inspectors to have unrestricted access to Iranian sites but upheld a demand that Iran suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment by October 31, according to a copy of the confidential text made available to AFP.

The United States is pushing for a tough resolution that sets a deadline, possibly as soon as October 31, for Tehran to fully suspend uranium enrichment, the process that makes fuel for civilian reactors but also the explosive material for atomic bombs, according to the text.

"We want the resolution to lay out essential and urgent steps for Iran to take," a US official said.

He said the United States saw the deadline as a "trigger," so that if Iran, which claims its nuclear program, were a peaceful civilian one, failed to do what was asked, the IAEA would automatically at its next meeting in November refer Tehran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

Britain, France and Germany, however, stress constructive engagement rather than confrontation with Iran. Their resolution gives Tehran a November deadline to allay concern that it is secretly developing nuclear weapons, but does not say Iran would automatically be taken before the Security Council should it fail to do so.

Some diplomats said the Americans felt they were having trouble negotiating with the so-called Euro 3 because the Europeans were bickering and divided.

"The Euro 3 is a shaky alliance. The Germans are an enormous problem and don't want to do anything" about Iran, a diplomat, who asked not to be identified, said.

But a Western diplomat close to the European side called such comments "ridiculous."

The diplomat said the Euro 3 might "need some time to compare notes and views" but had been united since talks began in Vienna on Monday, adding that the US demands were "drastic" and "do not find the support of anybody."

Twentsche Courant Tubantia

CIA-chef bevestigt Iran-link 11 september-kapers

19 juli 2004

WASHINGTON (ANP) - Waarnemend CIA-directeur John McLaughlin heeft gisteren bevestigd dat acht van de 11 september-kapers een of meerdere keren door Iran zijn gereisd. De weekbladen Time en Newsweek berichtten dat gisteren op basis van het rapport van de onafhankelijke commissie die onderzoek heeft gedaan naar de aanslagen van 11 september 2001.

Iraanse grenswachten zouden onder meer instructies hebben gekregen om geen stempels in hun paspoorten te zetten en hen op geen enkele andere wijze te hinderen, aldus de bladen.

De CIA-chef ontkende echter directe betrokkenheid van Iran. 'We hebben geen bewijs dat er een soort officieel verband is tussen Iran en 11 september.'

Iran reageerde gisteren al woedend op de publicaties. 'Pure propaganda', aldus het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken gisteren in de Iraanse krant Hamshahri. CIA-chef McLaughlin heeft gisteren gezegd dat hij de oprichting van een inlichtingenministerie niet nodig vindt. De '11 september-commissie' adviseert in zijn uitgelekte eindrapport tot de oprichting van zo'n ministerie. De CIA-directeur zou inlichtingenoperaties zelf goed kunnen overzien en aansturen, aldus McLaughlin bij het tv-programma Fox News Sunday. Een nieuwe minister zou een nieuwe bestuurslaag betekenen, aldus de tijdelijk directeur van de CIA. Volgens de New York Times is de creatie van deze nieuwe post de belangrijkste aanbeveling in het rapport. Het voorstel zou de invloed van het Pentagon en de CIA inperken.

Gelderlander

VS gaat rol Iran bij 11/9 na

20 juli 2004

WASHINGTON - De Verenigde Staten gaan onderzoeken of Iran betrokken was bij de aanslagen op 11 september 2001. Dat heeft president Bush gisteren gezegd, toen hij zijn Chileense ambtgenoot Lagos in het Witte Huis ontving.

De waarnemend directeur van de CIA, McLaughlin, verklaarde eerder dat enkele van de kapers die de aanslagen pleegden door Iran waren gereisd. Hij zei er echter bij dat er geen bewijs is voor directe steun van Teheran aan de terroristen.

Een commissie, die onderzoek deed naar de aanslagen, stelt in een deze week te publiceren rapport opnieuw de vraag aan de orde, waarom Bush zich na 11/9 op Irak concentreerde, hoewel het terreurnetwerk al-Qaeda meer contact met Iran dan met Irak onderhield. ANP/AFP

ANP

Iran verwerpt aantijgingen banden met al-Qaeda

20 juli 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - Iran verwerpt beschuldigingen van de Amerikaanse president Bush dat Teheran onderdak verleent aan leiders van al-Qaeda en mogelijk zelfs betrokken zou zijn geweest bij de aanslagen van 11 september 2001. Iran doet de aantijgingen af als „verzonnen”.

„Elke claim dat Iran een directe of indirecte relatie zou hebben met de terroristische incidenten van 11 september is louter en alleen verzonnen en fictief”, aldus woordvoerder Hamid Reza Asefi van het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.

Bush' commentaar volgde na opmerkingen van de tijdelijke chef van de geheime dienst CIA dat zeker acht van de kapers die de aanslagen op 11 september uitvoerden via Iran waren gereisd. Washington zegt geen bewijs te hebben voor Iraanse steun aan de aanslagen.

'Iran kan binnen enkele maanden kernbom maken'

27 juli 2004

LONDEN (ANP) - Iran is nog maar 'enkele maanden verwijderd' van de mogelijkheid uranium te verrijken voor een kernbom. Dit meldde de Britse krant The Times dinsdag op gezag van 'westerse diplomatieke bronnen'.

Het land heeft volgens de bronnen van de krant „tijd gekocht door te doen alsof het meewerkte met het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap (IAEA) en met een diplomatiek initiatief van Groot-Brittannië, Frankrijk en Duitsland".

Nu blijkt dat het land veel verder is met het verwerven van de relevante nucleaire technologie dan iedereen dacht, zei een Britse functionaris tegen The Times. „In feite zijn zij gewoon doorgedaan met onderzoek en nu zijn ze nog maar een paar maanden verwijderd van de completering van het programma."

Inspecties

Groot-Brittannië, Frankrijk en Duitsland bereikten in oktober 2003 met Iran een overeenkomst waarin dat land instemde met onverwachte inspecties van zijn nucleaire installaties door medewerkers van het IAEA. Ook zegde het bewind in Teheran toe dat het de verrijking van uranium zou staken.

De drie landen wekten vorige maand echter de woede van Iran toen zij binnen de IAEA een harde resolutie steunden waarin het land werd veroordeeld voor de gebrekkige samenwerking met de nucleaire waakhond. De aanleiding was onder meer dat de IAEA-inspecteurs gebreken in de rapportage van Iran over zijn nucleaire activiteiten hadden ontdekt. Iran dreigde toen weer met het verrijken van uranium te beginnen. Teheran verweet de drie landen dat zij hun woord niet hadden gehouden.

Nu proberen de drie landen volgens de bronnen van The Times een spoedoverleg met het bewind in Teheran te krijgen wegens de 'ernstige' situatie.

Iran maakt weer onderdelen voor centrifuges

31 juli 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - Iran heeft zaterdag bevestigd dat het weer onderdelen maakt voor centrifuges voor het verrijken van uranium. Daarmee heeft het land een afspraak overboord gezet die het in februari met de Europese Unie maakte.

Volgens de Iraanse minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Kharrazi heeft de EU zijn woord niet gehouden. Groot-Brittannië, Duitsland en Frankrijk bereikten namens de EU in oktober 2003 met Iran een overeenkomst waarin dat land onder meer instemde met het staken van de verrijking van uranium. In februari werd ook de productie van centrifugeonderdelen stilgelegd.

Inspecties

Maar de drie landen wekten vorige maand de woede van Iran, toen zij binnen het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap (IAEA) een harde resolutie steunden waarin het Aziatische land werd veroordeeld voor de gebrekkige samenwerking met de nucleaire waakhond. De IAEA voert inspecties in Iraanse kerncentrales uit.

Kharrazi benadrukte dat zijn land alleen de bouw van centrifuges heeft hervat, maar niet het verrijken van uranium. Dat is het belangrijkste onderdeel van het proces om brandstof voor elektriciteitscentrales te maken of materiaal voor bommen. „Op basis van onze afspraken in oktober, hebben we de verrijking van uranium opgeschort en we schorten die nog steeds op", aldus de Iraanse minister.

Iran vraagt om wapens en veiligheidsgarantie

11 augustus 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - De Iraanse regering heeft Europese landen tijdens overleg in Parijs om nucleaire technologie, conventionele wapens en een veiligheidsgarantie voor een aanval door Israël gevraagd. Dat heeft de Britse krant The Daily Telegraph woensdag gemeld op gezag van Britse regeringsfunctionarissen. Bij de ontmoeting in Parijs eerder deze maand sprak een Iraanse afvaardiging met hoge Franse, Duitse en Britse diplomaten. De Europeanen wilden de Iraanse functionarissen overreden te stoppen met het verrijken van uranium. Verrijkt uranium kan worden gebruikt voor het maken van nucleaire wapens. De westerse diplomaten waren met stomheid geslagen over het wensenpakket dat de Iraniërs op tafel legden. Volgens The Daily Telegraph zijn de Duitsers, Fransen en Britten er nog niet uit op welke wijze ze moeten reageren.

ANP

Eerste Iraanse kerncentrale jaar later in gebruik

22 augustus 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - De eerste kerncentrale van Iran, die met Russische hulp wordt gebouwd in de havenstad Bushehr, wordt pas in oktober 2006 in gebruik genomen. Dat is een jaar later dan oorspronkelijk het plan was. Dit heeft het Iraanse kernenergieagentschap zondag bekendgemaakt.

Projectmanager Assadollah Sabouri zei dat de oplevering van de centrale waarschijnlijk begin 2006 zal plaatsvinden. Het opstartproces zou zeven maanden in beslag nemen. In oktober zou de centrale dan volledig operationeel moeten zijn.

De centrale is omstreden. De Verenigde Staten vrezen dat er kernwapens ontwikkeld zullen worden. Iran ontkent dit en zegt dat de installatie er slechts voor vreedzame doeleinden komt. De directeur van het Internationaal Atoom Energieagentschap, el-Baradei, zei in juni dat de centrale in Bushehr niet het belangrijkste punt van zorg van zijn agentschap is.

ANP

Khatami: Iran heeft recht om uranium te verrijken

28 augustus 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - De Iraanse president Khatami vindt dat het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap IAEA het recht van Iran om uranium te verrijken voor vreedzame doeleinden moet accepteren. Volgens Khatami zullen dan alle problemen tussen Teheran en het IAEA voorbij zijn.

Khatami benadrukte zaterdag nog eens dat zijn land niet van plan is atoomwapens te produceren. De Verenigde Staten beschuldigen Iran ervan een nucleair programma voor de ontwikkeling van kernwapens te hebben.

Het IAEA heeft hiervoor geen bewijzen gevonden, maar nam in juni wel een scherpe resolutie aan waarin Iran ervan wordt beschuldigd onvoldoende mee te werken aan inspecties. De EU sprak in oktober met Iran af dat het land het verrijken van uranium voorlopig staakt. Voorzover bekend houdt Teheran zich vooralsnog aan deze afspraak

Brabants Dagblad

Onderzoek FBI naar spion in Pentagon

30 augustus 2004

Maandag 30 augustus 2004 - Washington - De FBI onderzoekt of een analist van het Amerikaanse ministerie van defensie geheime stukken heeft doorgespeeld aan Israël. Het zou gaan om gegevens over Amerikaans beleid inzake Iran, die via de Israëlische lobby-organisatie Aipac bij de geheime dienst van Israël terecht gekomen zouden zijn. Zowel de Israëlische regering als Aipac ontkennen de aantijgingen.

De verdachte is Iran-specialist Larry Franklin. Het is nog niet duidelijk of hij zal worden beschuldigd van spionage of een minder ernstig delict zoals het incorrect omgaan met niet-openbare documenten. Er zijn nog geen arrestaties verricht.

Franklin is volgens Amerikaanse media een oud-medewerker van de inlichtingendienst van defensie (DIA) en zou als reservist bij de Amerikaanse luchtmacht enkele keren kortstondig zijn uitgezonden naar Tel Aviv. Volgens het Pentagon had hij geen positie met veel invloed op het beleid.

Ongelovig

Het onderzoek van de Amerikaanse recherche loopt al meer dan een jaar. Het nieuws erover lekte zaterdagmorgen Nederlandse tijd uit via het journaal van zender CBS. Collega's en kennissen van de man lieten zich afgelopen weekend ongelovig uit over de affaire. Waarom zou een analist beleidsstukken moeten doorspelen, terwijl Aipac en Israël toegang hebben tot de hoogste regeringskringen, zo vroeg men zich af in dagblad Washington Post.

Israël ontkent dat het spionage bedrijft in de VS. Volgens regeringsvertegenwoordigers in Jeruzalem heeft de Pollard-affaire in de jaren tachtig radicaal een eind gemaakt aan pogingen illegaal informatie te verkrijgen van de Amerikaanse overheid. Bovendien zijn de betrekkingen met Washington nu zo goed, zeggen ze, dat alle gewenste inlichtingen via normale kanalen naar Israël vloeien. Het conservatieve Israëliische dagblad de Jerusalem Post citeerde gisteren een niet nader genoemde regeringsvertegenwoordiger, die de zaak-Franklin omschrijft als 'onderdeel van pogingen de geloofwaardigheid van Bush aan te tasten en hem af te schilderen als iemand die zich omringt en laat beheersen door joodse zionisten'. De FBI onderzoekt of een analist van het Amerikaanse ministerie van defensie geheime stukken heeft doorgespeeld aan Israël. Het zou gaan om gegevens over Amerikaans beleid inzake Iran, die via de Israëliische lobby-organisatie Aipac bij de geheime dienst van Israël terecht gekomen zouden zijn. Zowel de Israëliische regering als Aipac ontkennen de aantijgingen.

ANP

Kerry wil deal met Iran over kernwapens

30 augustus 2004

WASHINGTON (ANP) - Mocht John Kerry president van de Verenigde Staten worden, dan kan Iran een voorstel over het nucleaire programma tegemoet zien. Van Kerry mag het land zijn kerncentrales houden, maar moet het afzien van het bezit van materiaal waarvan bommen kunnen worden gemaakt.

Dat heeft de Democratische kandidaat voor het vice-presidentschap, John Edwards, maandag in de Washington Post gezegd. Mocht Teheran niet op de deal ingaan, dan geeft Iran in feite toe dat het bezig is kernwapens te produceren, stelt Edwards.

Iran heeft steeds gezegd kernenergie alleen te gebruiken voor vreedzame doelen, zoals gezondheidszorg. Hij benadrukte dat als Kerry wordt gekozen, hij Europese bondgenoten zal vinden die Iran zware sancties zullen opleggen als Teheran niet op het voorstel ingaat.

Het plan wijst erop dat Kerry het nucleaire conflict met Iran anders gaat aanpakken dan George Bush nu doet. Al eerder liet Kerry doorschemeren dat hij op zoek wil naar gezamenlijke belangen tussen beide landen. Bush schaarde Iran met het Irak van Saddam en Noord-Korea onder 'de as van het kwaad'. Nog deze maand verklaarde Bush dat Iran moet afzien van elke „nucleaire ambitie“.

ANP

'Beweringen Iran over uraniumbesmetting plausibel'

1 september 2004

WENEN (ANP) - De uitleg van Teheran, dat de eerder aangetroffen besmetting van Iraans materiaal met hoogverrijkt uranium afkomstig is van geïmporteerde onderdelen, is „plausibel“. Dat meldde het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap van de Verenigde Naties (IAEA) woensdag in een rapport.

Het IAEA ontdekte eind vorig jaar sporen van hoogverrijkt uranium, dat gebruikt kan worden voor kernwapens, bij een Iraanse elektriciteitscentrale. Begin juni werd opnieuw hoogwaardig uranium gevonden bij een andere nucleaire installatie. Volgens Teheran is het besmette materiaal afkomstig uit Pakistan en is dat land ook de bron van de besmetting.

De Verenigde Staten zagen de vondst van hoogverrijkt uranium als bewijs dat Iran er een geheim kernwapenprogramma op na houdt. Teheran spreekt dit ten stelligste tegen en zegt dat zijn nucleaire programma alleen vreedzame doeleinden heeft.

Volgens het IAEA is de uitleg van Iran geloofwaardig, maar worden ook andere mogelijke verklaringen voor de vondst van de uraniumsporen nog onderzocht. Het IAEA prees in zijn rapport de bereidheid tot medewerking van Iran, met name door het toelaten van onderzoekers bij nucleaire installaties. De atoomwaakhond had echter ook kritiek op Teheran omdat het lang heeft gewacht met de verstrekking van andere, gedetailleerde gegevens.

Iran heeft instemmend gereageerd op het IAEA-rapport. Volgens Teheran is het verslag „een positieve stap" die Iran in staat stelt zijn naam te zuiveren en aan te tonen dat zijn atoomprogramma een vreedzaam karakter heeft.

Eindhovens Dagblad

VS: Israël spioneert

4 september 2004

WASHINGTON – Israël ontkent, maar het land spioneert nog steeds in de Verenigde Staten. Agenten proberen Amerikaanse functionarissen over te halen te spioneren en geheime documenten te pakken te krijgen. Dat hebben Amerikaanse regeringsfunctionarissen gisteren gezegd in The Los Angeles Times. De federale recherche FBI onderzoekt volgens de krant nu al enige tijd of een medewerker van het ministerie van Defensie (Pentagon) en pro-Israël-lobbyisten belangrijke en zeer geheime documenten aan Israël hebben doorgespeeld. De belangrijkste nationale veiligheidsadviseurs zijn op de hoogte van dat onderzoek. De informatie gaat over Iran en zou naar Israël zijn doorgespeeld via het American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

President Bush en zijn nationale veiligheidsadviseur Condoleezza Rice hebben de AIPAC meerdere malen geprezen, vooral voor publicaties over Irans nucleaire ambities. AIPAC heeft ontkend iets fout te hebben gedaan. Ook wordt onderzocht, volgens de Washington Post van gisteren, of via het Pentagon informatie is uitgelekt naar de Iraakse politicus Ahmed Chalabi. Chalabi genoot eerder dit jaar als informant en lobbyist de (financiële) steun van het Amerikaanse ministerie van Defensie en vice-president Dick Cheney. Inmiddels is hij uit Washingtons gratie gevallen omdat de regering hem ervan verdenkt vertrouwelijke informatie aan Iran te hebben doorgegeven.

De FBI heeft de afgelopen jaren veel Israëlische diplomaten, geheim agenten en anderen in de VS gevolgd.

ANP

VS vastbesloten Iran van kernwapens af te houden

12 september 2004

JERUZALEM (ANP) - De Verenigde Staten zijn vastbesloten ervoor te zorgen dat Iran geen kernwapens in zijn bezit krijgt, ook als diplomatiek overleg over de kwestie mislukt. Dat heeft de Amerikaanse onderminister van Buitenlandse Zaken John Bolton zondag gezegd.

Na een onderhoud in Jeruzalem met de Israëlische minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Silvan Shalom zei Bolton dat „president Bush gericht is op een vreedzame oplossing voor het probleem van Iran's zoektocht naar kernwapens". Als dat niet lukt sluiten de VS andere acties niet uit, zo zei Bolton, zonder geweld expliciet als mogelijkheid te noemen.

IAEA

De opmerkingen van Bolton komen een dag voor een bijeenkomst van het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap (IAEA) in Wenen. Daar zal het ultimatum worden besproken dat Frankrijk, Duitsland en Groot-Brittannië zaterdag hebben opgesteld. Ze willen Iran tot november de tijd geven om de zorgen bij de internationale gemeenschap over een kernbom weg te nemen. Iran zou daarom onder meer moeten stoppen met het verrijken van uranium.

Iran heeft zondag het ultimatum verworpen. Het land is nog wel steeds bereid te garanderen dat zijn nucleaire programma slechts is bedoeld voor het opwekken van energie, zo zei woordvoerder Hamid Reza Asefi van het ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.

Frankrijk, Duitsland en Groot-Brittannië willen dat het IAEA de Veiligheidsraad van de Verenigde Naties vraagt sancties tegen Iran te overwegen, als dat land geen gehoor geeft aan het ultimatum. De Verenigde Staten dringen hier al langer op aan.

IAEA: geen termijn vastleggen beoordeling Iran

13 september 2004

WENEN (ANP) - In de strijd om duidelijkheid over het Iraanse nucleaire programma wil directeur El Baradei van het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap (IAEA) zich niet vastleggen op een bepaalde termijn.

Of en wanneer de Veiligheidsraad van de Verenigde Naties ingeschakeld wordt om die duidelijkheid zo nodig af te dwingen, hangt volgens hem af van Iran en van de lidstaten. Dat zei el-Baradei maandag voor de vergadering van het bestuur van de internationale atoomwaakhond in Wenen.

Verdrag

Iran zelf zegt dat het in verregaande mate heeft voldaan aan zijn verplichtingen uit het nonproliferatieverdrag. De voorzitter van de buitenlandcommissie van de Iraanse nationale veiligheidsraad, Hossein Mousavian, stelde dat het onderzoek van het IAEA in november kan worden afgerond. Daarna zou alleen nog sprake kunnen zijn van routinecontroles.

In een gesprek met de Britse krant The Financial Times vertelde hij maandag dat zijn land een tienpuntenplan voorstaat om het conflict over de nucleaire activiteiten van zijn land te beëindigen. Daarbij gaat het onder meer om het verrijken van uranium. Het plan omvat vernietiging van massavernietigingswapens, toegang tot al-Qaeda-verdachten in Iraanse gevangenissen en 'veiligheid in de regio, met inbegrip van de Perzische Golf en het Midden-Oosten'. Iran is echter niet bereid de verrijking van uranium helemaal op te geven, zoals Europa eist.

Groot-Brittannië, Frankrijk en Duitsland zouden Iran een ultimatum willen stellen waarin het voor 25 november afdoende moet hebben gereageerd op de vragen over zijn kernenergieprogramma.

Zuid-Korea

Het IAEA komt in november met een rapport over illegale nucleaire activiteiten van Zuid-Korea. Volgens el-Baradei heeft Zuid-Korea nagelaten de IAEA in te lichten over zijn programma voor het verrijken van uranium en het splitsen van plutonium.

Iran zal zich verzetten tegen druk van VS en EU

15 september 2004

TEHERAN (ANP) - Iran zal zich blijven verzetten tegen pogingen van de internationale gemeenschap om te voorkomen dat Teheran de hand legt op geavanceerde nucleaire technologie. Dat zei de machtige ex-president van de islamitische republiek, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani woensdag.

„De Europeanen en Amerikanen zeggen met vastbeslotenheid dat Iran geen eigenaar mag worden van nucleaire technologie en wij reageren vastberaden en zullen geen afstand doen van ons legitiem recht", zei Rafsanjani, geciteerd door het Iraanse studentenpersagentschap ISNA. „De Verenigde Staten en Europa zeggen dezelfde dingen en er zullen een hoop problemen in de toekomst komen", aldus het voormalige staatshoofd.

Hij bekritiseerde een ontwerp-resolutie van de Europeanen, voorgelegd aan het Internationaal Atoomenergie Agentschap (IAEA), die Iran oproept om uiterlijk in november duidelijkheid te geven over zijn kernenergieprogramma. Ook wordt Teheran gevraagd zijn activiteiten voor het verrijken van uranium op te schorten. Washington beschuldigt Iran te werken aan een kernwapen. Iran zegt slechts vreedzame doeleinden na te streven.

Volgens de Israëlische premier Ariel Sharon vormen de nucleaire ambities van Iran „een zeer groot gevaar" voor zijn land. Hij zei dat woensdag in een vraaggesprek met de krant Yediot Aharonot. Maar hij zwakte de kans op een eventuele Israëlische aanval op de Iraanse reactor af.

De situatie is niet hetzelfde als in 1981, toen Israël een Iraakse kernreactor in Osirak bombardeerde. Bovendien leidt Israël dit keer niet de campagne tegen het Iraanse nucleaire programma, aldus Sharon. Hij riep de wereld wel op zware druk te blijven uitoefenen op het Iraanse regime.

TIJDLIJN EN CITATEN NEDERLAND

16 juni

Tijdens een Algemeen Overleg van de Vaste Kamercommissies voor Europese Zaken en voor Buitenlandse Zaken zegt Minister Bot van Buitenlandse Zaken: “Bij een stemming in de IAEA-Board of Governors heeft Nederland bepleit om Iran onder druk te blijven zetten om opheldering te geven over zijn nucleaire programma. Nederland is dus vóór een stevige resolutie. Doorverwijzing naar de Veiligheidsraad is op dit moment nog niet aan de orde, maar wordt niet uitgesloten. Eerst zal echter de voortgangsrapportage van het IAEA afgewacht worden.” (21501-20 – nr. 257 - 16 juni 2004 – verslag vastgesteld 29 juli 2004)

1 juli

Minister Bot zegt in een Algemeen Overleg van de Vaste Kamercommissies voor Buitenlandse Zaken en voor Economische Zaken: “De vraag is wanneer de zaak moet worden voorgelegd aan de VN-Veiligheidsraad en sancties aan de orde zijn. Het Nederlands standpunt is dat sancties instrumenten zijn die pas aan het einde van een traject moeten worden ingezet. Vooral nog moeten andere instrumenten beproefd worden. In september zal de directeur-generaal van de IAEA opnieuw een rapport uitbrengen. Afhankelijk van de inhoud van dat rapport moet beoordeeld worden of Iran zijn verplichtingen niet nakomt en of de zaak aan de Veiligheidsraad moet worden voorgelegd. Tot die tijd moet de druk op Iran worden gehandhaafd en moeten de besprekingen over het handelsakkoord worden uitgesteld.” (29200V – nr. 100 – 1 juli 2004 - vastgesteld 31 augustus 2004)

16 augustus

Minister Bot schrijft in antwoord op kamervragen van Wilders (VVD): “Tenzij DG ElBaradei in zijn komende rapport reeds zou concluderen dat Iran in overtreding is, geeft de regering er de voorkeur aan de verdere uitkomsten van het IAEA-onderzoek af te wachten. Door te vroeg de zaak aan de Veiligheidsraad door te geleiden zou een belangrijke methode van waarheidsvinding in gevaar kunnen worden gebracht, met mogelijk nadelige gevolgen voor de uiteindelijke besluitvorming door de Veiligheidsraad.” (DVB/NN-343/03 – 16 augustus 2004)

6 september

Gesprek van Premier Balkenende en Minister Bot met de Iraanse veiligheidsadviseur in Den Haag, in het kader van het Nederlandse voorzitterschap van de EU.

7 september

Uitzending Twee Vandaag over levering door Nederlandse bedrijven van onderdelen voor kernwapens aan landen die de internationale kernwapenverdragen hierover niet getekend hebben. De Kamerleden Van Velzen (SP) en Van der Laan (D66) stellen naar aanleiding van deze uitzending schriftelijke vragen.

KRONIEK 2004

januari	Lord Robertson vertrekt als Secretaris-Generaal van de NAVO
1 januari	Ierland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
1 januari	Einde Nederlands voorzitterschap OVSE
1 januari	Verenigde Staten nemen voorzitterschap G8 over
20 januari - 26 maart	Eerste sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
21-25 januari	World Economic Forum, Davos
6-7 februari	Annual Munich Security Conference, München
20 februari	Parlementsverkiezingen Iran
27 februari	Bezoek Schröder aan Washington
maart	Parlementsverkiezingen Spanje
1 maart	Ministeriële bijeenkomst VS-EU, Washington
8 maart	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
14 maart	Presidentsverkiezingen Rusland
2 april	Bezoek Colin Powell aan Duitsland en België
2 april	Informele bijeenkomst NAVO Ministers van Defensie
5 april	Parlementsverkiezingen Indonesië
5-23 april	UN Disarmament Commission, jaarlijkse bijeenkomst, New York
9-16 april	Bezoek Dick Cheney aan China, Japan en Zuid-Korea
15 april	Parlementsverkiezingen Zuid-Korea
26 april – 7 mei	NPT PrepCom, New York
mei	Bijeenkomst Chemical Weapons Convention, Den Haag
1 mei	Toetreding diverse landen tot de Europese Unie
10 mei -25 juni	Tweede sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
juni	Verkiezingen Europees Parlement
juni	Parlementsverkiezingen Japan
5-6	Bezoek George W. Bush aan Frankrijk
8-10 juni	G-8 Summit, Sea Island, Georgia
14 juni	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
28-29 juni	NAVO-top, Istanbul
1 juli	Nederland neemt voorzitterschap EU over
19-30 juli	Biological Weapons Convention, expert meeting, Geneve
september	Start Algemene Vergadering Verenigde Naties, New York
26 juli – 10 september	Derde sessie Conference on Disarmament, Geneve
13 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
20-24 september	IAEA General Conference, Wenen
27 september	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
2 november	Presidentsverkiezingen Verenigde Staten
25 november	IAEA Board of Governors Meeting, Wenen
6-10 december	Jaarlijkse bijeenkomst Biological Weapons Convention, Geneve

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Overzicht van recente ontwikkelingen in de transatlantische betrekkingen, met name binnen de NAVO, mede naar aanleiding van uitspraken in de State of the Union.
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