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US State Department

Remarks to the press by Secretary of State Colin L. Powell

Manaus, Brazil – 17 November 2004

[...] SECRETARY POWELL: [...] And, of course, we are continuing to work both the North Korean and Iranian nuclear weapons issues. I see that progress, however slow, is being made in both of those areas. Spotlights and heat lamps have been put on both the North Korean and the Iranian programs. The international community is energized.

The EU-3 has made some progress on Iran. We have to be cautious, I think, until verification teams can go in. And there is some new information that you've seen, dissident reporting on Iranian possession of plans as to how they would actually weaponize a warhead if they were able to create a warhead. So, these are areas that bubble up to the surface of requiring constant attention, and of course will be priorities of Dr. Rice and for the President in the next term. [...]

QUESTION: Can I take you back to what you were saying about Iran, and the latest accusations? The group that has made this has sometimes been right with the facts and has sometimes been wrong. You also talked about verification, so what's the US attitude to this? Is this something that looks credible, or do you need to look into it further?

SECRETARY POWELL: I have seen intelligence which would corroborate what this dissident group is saying. And it should be of concern to all parties. There's been some commentary that the United States did not want to work with the EU-3, or separated itself from the EU-3. The EU-3 has played an important role, but they know as well as we do that they got an agreement with Iran in the Fall of 2003, and then Iran violated that agreement and broke the commitments that it made. So, the EU-3, in this instance, went back in. We didn't become a part of the EU-3 because that wouldn't have been appropriate and I'm not sure the Iranians would have welcomed that anyway. But, the EU-3 went back in this time, with us having full knowledge of every negotiating position they were taking, what they were presenting to the Iranians. I've been in constant touch with all three foreign ministers, and John Bolton, my very, very determined Undersecretary of [State] for Arms Control, has been in constant touch with all of their political directors. So, we were right there with them as this unfolded. And we said to them, "you've got to make sure you've got something that gives us some confidence that they're going to meet their commitments this time." And they think that they have done that, and they're now working to get our verification teams in from the IAEA.

And we'll be following this with a certain degree of caution -- not in opposition to what's going on, but with necessary, deserved caution, because for 20 years the Iranians have been trying to hide things from the international community. And it is the United States, rather than us being a problem, we have been the ones who have been pointing out to the world since 2001, when the President came into office, that there was a problem in Iran. And, finally, the Russians came to that conclusion, the IAEA came to that conclusion and the EU-3 got involved. And if it hadn't been for the kind of attention that we have given to this issue, both at the Presidential level, at my level, at John Bolton's level, at many other levels, I'm not sure we would have seen the kind of attention given to the issue that we're now seeing given to this issue. Now, once we continue to examine the EU-3 document and the Iranian response and what the IAEA is doing, it will all go up to the IAEA Board of Governors later this month. We'll have a chance to examine it all there and make a judgment as to what is the appropriate action following the IAEA Board of Governors meeting.

QUESTION: If I can ask a follow-up to the first part of the question, when you say that you have seen evidence that corroborates what...which elements? They're saying three things: one, that A.Q. Khan gave both a warhead design and bomb-grade uranium, and then the other thing they're saying is that they are developing uranium at a secret northeast location.

SECRETARY POWELL: I have seen information...I haven't seen the entire report on my blackberry, we're all blackberried together. But I have seen information that suggests...I can't say it came from A.Q. Khan...but I have seen some information that would suggest that they had been actively working on delivery systems, to deliver.

QUESTION: Deliver? What deliveries?

SECRETARY POWELL: You don't have a weapon until you put it in something that can deliver a weapon.

QUESTION: But, you're talking about missiles?

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm talking about delivery systems.

QUESTION: So, no necessarily the uranium, the bomb-grade uranium?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I'm not talking about uranium. I'm not talking about fissile material. I'm not talking about a warhead. I'm talking about what one does with a warhead. So, in other words, there is no doubt in my mind, and it is clearly straightforward, I think, from what we've been saying for years, that they have been interested in a nuclear weapon that has utility, meaning that it is something they would be able to deliver, not just something that sits there.

QUESTION: Sir, excuse me, but, isn't it a matter of public record that they have delivery systems, missiles capable of delivering such weapons?

SECRETARY POWELL: I'm not talking about whether they had the missiles. I'm talking about information that says that they not only had these missiles, but I'm aware of information that suggests they were working hard as to how to put the two together.

QUESTION: So, I just want to follow up on what you said about the EU-3 deal. You said that they think...

SECRETARY POWELL: Excuse me, just to make sure, but I can't say anything about the northeast, about the A.Q. Khan. I don't have that level of detail.

QUESTION: They think that they've found a way to make it work...

SECRETARY POWELL: make the...

QUESTION: The EU-3 said they think they've found a way to make it work now. You think they've found a way to make it work. Will you, when you're in Sharm, meet with the Iranian foreign minister?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, we'll be meeting in a group. Whether there is any opportunity for other meetings or whether there's any need for other meetings, I don't know. We haven't made a judgment.

QUESTION: But, do you think that...

SECRETARY POWELL: I've met with them like this in previous settings, 6 plus 2 in Afghanistan and at other international fora. So, that's the kind of meeting we're going to have. Whether anything, whether there's a social opportunity or not remains to be seen.

QUESTION: Do you think the EU-3 is right to think they've found a way to make it work this time?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well to make it work... what they have gotten is the Iranians to say that they will suspend for some period of time. And we really have always been interested in more than just something that can be switched on and off. Now, with the necessary verification in place, the other assurances they may have gotten, maybe it's more than that. And so, we are going to continue to follow this carefully, follow the verification work that's going to be done, and be cautious because the Iranians have a pattern of behavior that suggests caution is quite appropriate at this time. [...]

Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Kamerbrief inzake afspraken tussen E3 en Iran over het Iraanse nucleaire programma

DVB/NN-517/04 – 17 November 2004

Naar aanleiding van het verzoek van de vaste commissie voor Buitenlandse Zaken (04-buza-65) breng ik de Kamer graag op de hoogte van de recente uitkomsten van de onderhandelingen tussen de 'E3' (Verenigd Koninkrijk, Duitsland en Frankrijk) en Iran over het Iraanse nucleaire programma.

Op 14 november jongstleden hebben Duitsland, Frankrijk en het Verenigd Koninkrijk ('E3') overeenstemming bereikt met Iran over een akkoord betreffende het nucleaire programma van Iran. Kernelement is dat Iran heeft ingestemd met opschorting van alle verrijkings- en opwerkingsgerelateerde activiteiten. Ook zal Iran het Additioneel Protocol vrijwillig blijven toepassen in afwachting van ratificatie door het Iraanse Parlement.

Het International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is hiervan op de hoogte gebracht en heeft het verzoek gekregen de opschorting te verifiëren. De opschorting zal gelden voor de duur van de onderhandelingen

over een wederzijds acceptabele lange termijnovereenkomst. Een dergelijke lange termijnovereenkomst zal objectieve garanties moeten bieden dat het Iraanse nucleaire programma uitsluitend vreedzame doeleinden nastreeft. De overeenkomst zal verder moeten voorzien in duidelijke garanties ten aanzien van nucleaire, technologische en economische samenwerking, alsmede duidelijke toezeggingen ten aanzien van veiligheidsaangelegenheden.

Als direct resultaat van de nu tot stand gekomen overeenkomst zal de E3 bevorderen dat IAEA Directeur Generaal El Baradei Iran zal uitnodigen zitting te nemen in de Expert Groep inzake een Multilaterale Aanpak van de Nucleaire Brandstofcyclus, waarin overigens reeds een Nederlandse expert zitting heeft. Zodra de opschorting is geverifieerd, zal de EU de onderhandelingen over een Handels- en Samenwerkingsakkoord met Iran heropenen. Dit is in overeenstemming met de Europese Raadsconclusies van 5 november jongstleden. Verder zal actief worden bevorderd dat Iran toetredings-onderhandelingen kan aanvangen met de Wereldhandelsorganisatie (WHO).

Het is echter te vroeg om nu reeds te spreken van een definitieve doorbraak. Zo zal DG El Baradei tijdens de komende Bestuursraad van het IAEA die begint op 25 november aanstaande, op basis van verificatie door het Agentschap moeten kunnen verklaren dat de Iraanse opschorting daadwerkelijk wordt uitgevoerd, en het is niet zeker of hij dat ook op dat moment zal kunnen doen.

Evenmin is duidelijk of andere belangrijke partners zoals de Verenigde Staten ermee zullen instemmen dat op deze basis doorverwijzing naar de Veiligheidsraad van de Verenigde Naties niet de aangewezen stap is. Nederland koerst af op conclusies van de RAZEB die het onderhandelingsproces van de E3 ondersteunen. Tegelijkertijd is het nucleaire dossier niet het enige punt van zorg in de verhoudingen met Iran. Derhalve zal de regering tevens bevorderen dat de mate van samenwerking die de EU op politiek en economisch gebied met dit land nastreeft, afhankelijk blijft van voortgang op het gebied van mensenrechten, terrorisme en het Midden-Oosten-vredesproces.

De Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken,
Dr. B.R. Bot

White House

White House daily briefing

by Press Secretary Scott McClellan – 18 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: Is the -- what's the White House reaction to the discovery, or the news that Iran is trying to outfit nuclear warheads on missiles?

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, I think Secretary Powell was talking about intelligence that we have seen; that's what he was referring to. I think our views are very clear about Iran. Iran needs to follow through on the recent agreement they came to with our European friends. They need to fully comply with the IAEA and their inspections. They need to suspend their enrichment related and reprocessing activities. And they need to ratify and adhere to the additional protocol, as well. That's our view.

QUESTION: Scott, there's nothing in --

MR. McCLELLAN: Obviously, the International Atomic Energy Agency looks at all the issues related to Iran and its nuclear programs. And we expect Iran to cooperate fully with the IAEA. They've spent quite a bit of time over the years hiding their program and their intentions.

QUESTION: What implications would it have for the Middle East for Iran to have nuclear tipped missiles?

MR. McCLELLAN: What implications would it have in the Middle East?

QUESTION: For the Middle East --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, the international community is united in its resolve to make sure Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon. And that's why we are working for a peaceful, diplomatic solution to this matter. And, ultimately, our view is that Iran needs to stop all its enrichment related and reprocessing activities; there's no need for it. And that's the way to show -- give everybody confidence that they're not pursuing a nuclear weapon

QUESTION: Scott, there's nothing in the agreement with the Europeans that concerns missiles in any way. There's nothing in the IAEA's charter that permits them to even investigate missile activities. So is the United States making any particular demands on Iran, or any suggestions to the Europeans about how missile development should be included in these --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, look, Iran has made commitments to the international community, and they need to follow through on those commitments.

QUESTION: They have nothing to do with missiles --

MR. McCLELLAN: What we're talking about is activities that could be related to a nuclear weapon program, and the International Atomic Energy Agency looks at those issues. If you're talking about developing warheads that could be put on delivery systems, like missiles and --

QUESTION: But that's not what the Secretary said, right? He said --

MR. McCLELLAN: Well, again, I mean, I can't get into discussing any of the intelligence that he's referring to, beyond what he said. But we are continuing to work through the international community, work with the international community to make sure that Iran does not develop a nuclear weapon.

QUESTION: -- report about the dissident group in Europe that said there is a secret installation where the Iranians are actually enriching right now. Have you seen that; can you confirm that?

MR. McCLELLAN: Seen the reports?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. McCLELLAN: Yes. We're aware of those reports. I mean, that's been -- the report in the press over the last couple of days. And certainly, as you're aware, that is an organization that we include on our terrorist list. And so it's not an organization that we have any contacts with, but --

QUESTION: Do you have any --

MR. McCLELLAN: All the reports of that nature are things that the International Atomic Energy Agency should look at as part of their investigation into Iran's nuclear program. But, you know, no, we're not in a position to get into verifying the validity of that report. [...]

US State Department

State Department noon briefing

by deputy spokesman Adam Ereli – 18 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: This is either a boom question or a silly one but it's very straightforward. What is the U.S. position on the deal with three Europeans struck with Iran? Do you approve of it? Are you in a watchful waiting mode? Do you disapprove? Are you skeptical?

MR. ERELI: The Secretary spoke to this in his interview with -- or briefing with the press yesterday. I think I'd refer you to his remarks. This is -- the best -- I guess the best word I would use is agnostic. We've seen this thing before -- this was -- seen this thing before. They've had a deal the EU to suspend enrichment. They broke it. The EU-3 goes back and negotiates and comes up with another deal. We'll be discussing it. We have discussed it. We are discussing it with the EU-3. It will be the subject of discussion at the Board of Governors meeting.

This is something that the EU -- that we were advised of, knew about, are consulting with consistently with the EU-3, but the Secretary and his -- with his colleagues, Under Secretary Bolton with his colleagues, so it is something that we have been informed with, consulted with, aware of, but it is a deal between the EU-3 and Iran. And we, I think, are appropriately reserving of judgment on it based on previous experience.

The important issue here is not just -- not specifically the deal itself, but the bigger picture, and that is, a -- continuing indications of a clandestine nuclear program, which Iran persists in developing, that poses a threat to the region and, we believe, to the United States, and is something that the international community is seized with and is, I think, committed to confronting.

This is a position we have made very clear for the past -- for the past more than 10 years, 18 years -- and, you know, the more we dig, the more we engage with Iran, the clearer it becomes to us, and we think the rest of the international community, that there's a there there. And I would look at the EU-3, latest EU-3 deal as a recognition that there is a problem, that there is a need to do something about it, and that they're trying this approach. It's been tried before. It didn't work very well. They're going at it again. We will continue to work with them, discuss with them and deal with the issue in the appropriate fora, which is the IAEA and make our conclusions frankly based on Iranian actions.

Again, at this point, we are in the stage of, I think, rhetoric. But the rubber meets the road when, you know, Iran respects its commitments over time. So far, we haven't seen that.

QUESTION: Is there anything to be gained, any point, in bilateral meetings with the Iranians like at Sharm el-Sheikh, for instance?

MR. ERELI: That is a purely speculative question.

QUESTION: You're not going to say it's all -- in other words, when you say speculative, that leaves open the possibility that we'll have them, doesn't it?

MR. ERELI: I don't -- I'm not aware that that possibility is being considered.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: Last week, Secretary Powell said that he talked earlier this week, he called it progress, the Iranian deal with the EU-3. Is that still the State Department's position that the deal is -- shows some progress?

MR. ERELI: I won't characterize it that way. First of all, let's let -- the Secretary's words speaks for themselves. What I would echo is that we are approaching this issue and dealing with this issue with the appropriate degree of caution. We've been down this road before, the Iranians went off track, the EU are trying to get them back on track, but we are appropriately cautious, given past experience.

QUESTION: Can I follow up?

MR. ERELI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Having said that, are you still considering pushing the issue of security -- to the Security Council?

MR. ERELI: Well, we've been clear that, based on Iran's past actions, we believe that this is an issue that should be referred to the Security Council. It is a matter that -- and that is a matter of record.

This issue will be something we will be discussing with the IAEA Board of Governors later this month, and based on, you know, what's happened with the Director General reports, based on the views of others, we'll decide and come to consensus about what the next steps are.

But it's the United States', and it's consistently been the United States' position, that Iran has, based on what it has already done, demonstrated that they have -- that this is a matter that should -- that we think should go to the Security Council.

QUESTION: But has Iran successfully split the U.S. from its -- how can you go to the Security Council if France and Britain are happy with this plan?

MR. ERELI: You're asking me two different questions. The question was, one, what does the United States think? I'm telling you what the United States thinks.

QUESTION: Oh, yeah, I understand what you think -- in a practical way.

MR. ERELI: You're asking question two, why can't -- what can be done about it? And the answer is to continue to put the spotlight on Iran's actions or its misactions and continue to work with the international community, including the EU-3, on constraining Iran, on getting it to meet its international obligations and getting it to meet its treaty commitments, and, failing that, to take appropriate international action. That's what we're engaged in.

QUESTION: Can I follow up? I just want to put this in the context of the Secretary's remarks on the plane. I mean, if -- you know, if the U.S. believed that Iran was developing a delivery system, then why would this agreement -- why would you even consider this agreement because you feel as if it's not a peaceful program?

MR. ERELI: The agreement with the EU is to suspend enrichment, uranium enrichment activity. That is what the IAEA has called upon Iran to do, and that is the goal that we are all working towards. Whether this latest effort can accomplish that goal is going to be something that -- is something we're just talking about with the Europeans and will be a further matter of discussion with the IAEA.

As far as Iran's missile program, that's again been a matter -- first of all, it's not -- that's not a subject of or a matter for the IAEA. It's not a subject of discussion at the IAEA Board of Governors. That's another piece of the puzzle. It deals with the issue of not necessarily the development of weapons of mass destruction but the development of delivery systems. Again, that has been a concern that we have voiced very consistently and I think have been very determined in working with our partners in the international community to address and to try and prevent.

QUESTION: Adam, can I -- one more. Are you saying, or was the Secretary saying, that you're just talking about your general concerns about Iran's missile deliver -- missile program, or is he suggesting that Iran is developing warhead designs?

MR. ERELI: I'd refer you to the specific remarks he has -- his specific remarks. I'm not going to -- I'm not in a position to elaborate on what the Secretary said. I think what we've made clear consistently is we believe Iran has a covert nuclear weapons program and they are -- and their programs to develop delivery systems are of concern and a threat to the region and to the United States.

QUESTION: Okay, but without parsing the Secretary's comments, does the U.S. believe that Iran is developing a warhead design?

MR. ERELI: I don't have a judgment to share with you on that.

QUESTION: If I could follow up on that, on the delivery system, would Iran, as part of getting back on track that you were talking about, would it have to give up its delivery system or disband it as part of that getting back on track, or that would be subject to (inaudible)?

MR. ERELI: The getting on track or off track were remarks related to suspension of uranium activity. So that deals with development of WMD. The missile issue is a different issue and dealt with in a different forum.

QUESTION: So if you would, you know, if they get back on track as far as the enrichment, and so on, and they request a bilateral meeting, would that be then --

MR. ERELI: Well, let's put the bilateral meeting aside. Everyone is talking -- there's a lot of talk about bilateral meetings. I think our position on engagement with the Iranians is clear. We have always said we're not opposed to talking with the Iranians, if and when we have an interest in doing so, and when the President determines that it's in our interest to do so. So that's a general statement of principle. I'm not aware of any consideration being given -- serious consideration being given to such engagement. Why? Because, frankly, we haven't seen the kind of, or -- there's -- it doesn't strike us as the moment or opportunity to do so.

The second issue that you talk about is the issue of weapons development. That's an issue that we're dealing with through the IAEA, through multilateral diplomacy. That's proven effective, we think, and is the appropriate way to deal with it, and that's where we're focusing our efforts.

QUESTION: Adam, I want to see if I heard you correctly and then ask you to try and put two -- explain two statements. You said that their programs to develop delivery systems is a threat to the United States, if I heard you correctly.

MR. ERELI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: And then you said you're not -- you're opposed to talking to them unless the U.S. has an interest in doing so. If it's a direct threat to the United States, why wouldn't you have an interest in talking to them?

MR. ERELI: Let me put it this way. I don't want to break any new ground here on the subject of talking to Iran. And for our position on that, I think it's very well stated, as a matter of public record, in testimony by both the Deputy Secretary and the Secretary. So if you want the mantra on, you know, what our position is on talking to Iran, look to those. I'm speaking from that script. So that's number one.

Number two, Iran's programs are a threat to U.S. interests. I think that's, again, patently obvious. Your question goes to the issue of what's the best way to deal with confronting that threat and protecting those interests. It is at this point in time our position, our assessment, that the most effective way of dealing with that threat is through the mechanisms and the processes we have in place, through the IAEA, through international cooperation, through multilateral diplomacy, that, I guess, bears the -- that moves the ball forward in the way that we want to move it forward.

I'm not ruling out the possibility at some time in the future, given some constellation of circumstances, taking other approaches, and that's what our more senior officials have spoken to quite publicly. So don't -- really, don't read into or make more out of what I'm saying than what has already been said.

QUESTION: But those statements you referred us to are old statements. We're looking to the future. And they're statements presumably made before this disturbing development about trying to marry a missile to the weapon, which, by the way, I don't know if you're saying they're just trying or you're saying they've succeeded in finding a way to do this. I think you're saying they're just trying, so far.

So I guess we're repeating ourselves. We're trying to look ahead, just a few days down the road, and, frankly, it's hard to believe if you're this -- no, I mean, I believe what you're saying -- but it's hard to imagine that if you are so concerned and you're in the same room with the Iranians, what would be the harm in talking to them? What could be lost? Why not? You talk to North Koreans. You talk to -- you talk to just about everybody --

MR. ERELI: Let me put it this way. Let me put it this way. The issue is not talking. The issue is not, if you're in the same room and you talk then maybe there's a solution. I think that's a little quixotic. The issue is analyzing Iranian behavior, Iranian strategic intent and Iranian actions, and on the basis of those considerations, coming to a considered judgment about what approach is going to lead to the conclusion that you're looking for. And that's why we're taking the approach that we're taking.

Now, frankly, given where things are, given the number of serious concerns we have with Iranian behavior, not just in the area of WMD and missile technology, but in the issue of support for terrorism, opposition to the peace process, attitudes towards Iraq, the question is not a pull-aside at one international gathering or another. The question is moving -- the question is, is confronting these issues in a systematic and substantive way, and that's what is -- that is what we're basing our approach on.

Yes.

QUESTION: Back to Security Council issue. You said that it's your policy to refer them. If you hear enough from the European -- EU-3 and from whoever else -- the IAEA, are you willing to consider the possibility of postponing referring them to the Security Council this time?

MR. ERELI: This will be a matter of discussion at the IAEA. I don't want to preview now what our -- what those negotiations might produce. I will describe to you what our position as a matter of record has been and what our goals are. Our goals are: To get Iran to stop and cease its nuclear weapons program. And we're going to work with our EU colleagues and our IAEA colleagues to achieve that end.

What specific steps are taken in what sequence in response to what actions, again, I'm just not going to go down the road of talking about hypotheticals. I will tell you what our goal is; and our goal is to move Iran away from its -- the path that it has taken, which is to develop nuclear weapons.

QUESTION: But if the way for you to get to that goal is to be a little more flexible with your policy, are you willing to consider it?

MR. ERELI: Like I said, I'm not going to discuss with you all the different possibilities of how we meet that goal. Right now, our focus is multilateral diplomacy, working with partners to achieve an international consensus, an international action in response to a common threat. And that involves, you know, that involves all aspects of multilateral diplomacy. [...]

US State Department

State Department noon briefing

by deputy spokesman Adam Ereli – 19 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: Is there any concern either on the part of the Secretary or this building that the information that he shared about Iranian efforts toward weaponization may be based on unverified intelligence and the potential for a credibility -- compounding the credibility problem that America already has?

MR. ERELI: I'm not going to speak to the intelligence information available to us. What I will say is that we believe we are on very, very solid ground in pointing to a clandestine effort by Iran to develop weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. This has been a refrain of the United States for well over a decade. It is a consistent theme of our diplomacy, both publicly and privately. And we will continue to call attention to what we believe are Iran's clandestine efforts that threaten the region and U.S. interests in the region.

QUESTION: Therefore, do you believe that Iran is, in fact, weaponizing? Is that -- you talked about solid ground.

MR. ERELI: As I said, we believe there is solid information to substantiate Iranian -- clandestine Iranian efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, and this is something we've been saying for quite some time. And I would note, in the context of the current discussion in the Board of Governors and regarding Iran's enrichment program, that four years ago, when we started, I think, forcefully and vocally bringing this issue to the attention of the international community, we were greeted with skepticism and doubt, and that over the course of our persistent efforts to press this issue, we succeeded in, I think, moving the pendulum in the other direction, where now the international community recognizes there's a problem, believes that our claims from before are substantiated, and as a result is working together to address the problems posed by Iran's nuclear activity, which is in contravention of many of its treaty commitments.

QUESTION: But which -- exactly what countries agree with you that your evidence is substantiated about Iran's drive?

MR. ERELI: Well, I would point to the fact that Russia, as a result of, you know, this effort, has agreed that - not to supply fuel to Bushehr until these concerns are addressed, and if they did supply fuel, it would only be on a closed fuel cycle. If you didn't think the concerns were substantiated, or didn't think the concerns would have merit, you wouldn't do that.

And I'd also point to seven Board of Governor resolutions, adopted by consensus, that raise serious questions about Iran's program, that point to Iran's failings and that call for Iran to undertake actions to reassure the IAEA and to reassure the international community. So that are very tangible -- those are very tangible indicators.

QUESTION: None of them -- none of them say -- come out and say what you've just said, that they agree that the United States has evidence that substantiates that Iran is trying to develop a nuclear weapon.

MR. ERELI: I would say --

QUESTION: Do they or do they not? I mean, the IAEA has been specific in saying, in saying not that. In saying --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) said it today.

MR. ERELI: Okay, let me, perhaps, rephrase it and say that what we're seeing in the IAEA Board of Governors, what we're seeing in our dealings with other countries is that -- compared to where we were four years ago -- is that there is a recognition that the position of the United States regarding Iran's nuclear activity is -- has merit and that there are -- that it is of concern, and that therefore, based on the fact that our position has gained currency because of our diplomacy, we see a level of consensus and a level of commitment to dealing with this problem that did not exist.

Now, on the question of a covert nuclear weapons program, there are differences of opinion. We believe that the arguments stack up in our favor. We will continue to press this case. We do not believe that a country with the world's second largest reserves of natural gas has a need for nuclear energy, and that there is no

rationale other than non-peaceful for this kind of investment in this kind of activity. And we will continue to make our case.

QUESTION: But the fact that -- your answer to the first bit -- not that second part, but the answer to the first bit leads directly back to Tammy's question. You have -- yes, you have succeeded in swinging the pendulum of world opinion to share at least, if not your conclusions, your concerns. Is there not a fear that the information that was shared the other day might hurt that effort and the effort to get other people to come around to your conclusions, rather than just your concerns?

MR. ERELI: I think the point that we're consistently making is, look at this in context. Don't just focus on an enrichment -- uranium enrichment program. Don't just focus on a nuclear plant here or a nuclear plant here. But look at it in the totality of the picture. And the picture is you've got undeclared and -- undeclared nuclear activity, deliberate misinformation on nuclear activity, development of delivery systems and other technical research that, added all up, paints a very troubling picture.

And you need to look at it in that perspective, rather than just, you know, one specific issue or one specific aspect of the problem divorced from another problem, from another -- from the totality of it. And in that context, when you add it all up, it's a very troubling picture. And I think that what we're trying to do is explain that this is all part and parcel of a coordinated attempt.

QUESTION: Doesn't it strike you as unusual that you're using the exact same -- the exact opposite rationale on this that you used with Iraq, where you were telling people to focus on particularly one specific thing? Doesn't that give you any pause at all when you're standing up there?

MR. ERELI: I don't understand. I don't understand the question.

QUESTION: Nevermind.

QUESTION: Adam --

QUESTION: No, but I do have a question. It's now a few days it's been out there, that intelligence supports the opposition groups' claim that Iran is trying to adapt missiles to nuclear weapons. Which intelligence? We learn from Iraq, the Iraq experience, number one, that it's not an off, out-of-bounds question because the CIA was identified as the primary source of Secretary Powell's speech to the UN, and we also learned that the State Department intelligence, which is a smaller outfit, didn't go along on all fronts.

So whose -- which intelligence? Who is corroborating an obviously biased group's report of what Iran is up to?

MR. ERELI: Barry, I'm not in a position to talk about intelligence --

QUESTION: (Inaudible) we're in a position to talk about Powell going over to see the CIA Director for four days, getting a total (inaudible). What you guys neglected to tell us is that not every intelligence part of the government was in agreement with what he was hearing over there. And, of course, what he was hearing over there was baloney, so -- or mostly baloney.

MR. ERELI: I'd dispute that, but anyway --

QUESTION: Well, where are the weapons of mass destruction?

MR. ERELI: But I'm not in a position to discuss with you the kind of intelligence we have or the status of debate within the international interagency community about --

QUESTION: Which part of the intelligence apparatus of the U.S. Government is verifying this opposition group's accusations?

MR. ERELI: I don't know.

QUESTION: Adam --

QUESTION: Adam, excuse me?

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: Adam, the Secretary himself -- I mean, I know you don't want to get into intelligence, but the Secretary himself mentioned that he saw some intelligence that is now, you know, whoever it is, on background or whatever, some U.S. officials are discrediting as not fully vetted, not fully scrubbed. So does the Secretary stand by his remarks in terms of his backing up his claims referring to this intelligence?

MR. ERELI: I don't think this is a question of backing up claims or not backing up claims. The Secretary did not misspeak. The Secretary knows exactly what he was talking about. And there is a firm basis for the Secretary making the remarks that he made. And there should be, I think, no question of -- in our mind -- of casting doubt or walking it back.

QUESTION: Okay, but when you say that there's a firm basis, he is citing his firm basis on the intelligence that he saw.

MR. ERELI: Yeah. I'm not going to get into a public debate about the nature and quality of the information. I'm just not.

QUESTION: Well, when you say a firm basis, are you referring to the intelligence that he had seen, in terms of that being reliable and solid? Or are you talking about he had a firm basis for saying what he said in terms of he saw a piece of paper and --

MR. ERELI: The Secretary used the word information.

QUESTION: Okay. The Secretary saw information --

MR. ERELI: And information is totality of inputs leading to a considered conclusion.

QUESTION: Well, but that information, though, he regards as solid, that he would not have mentioned it or spoken of it unless he was certain that it was solid, is that correct?

MR. ERELI: I think that's correct.

QUESTION: You think that's correct. Okay. Well, then how -- that hasn't always been the case, has it? Or was it -- or it was, in fact, on February 5th?

MR. ERELI: You know, I'm not going to get into, sort of, parallels with other situations.

QUESTION: Well, the problem is --

MR. ERELI: What I think we need to keep in mind is that our concerns -- we've had longstanding concerns about Iran's weapons programs. That includes WMD material and delivery systems. We believe there is justification and good reason to conclude that Iran is intent on developing weapons of mass destruction and the systems capable of delivering them, and that this program -- coordinated program -- represents a threat to the region and to the U.S. interests. We have said this very clearly for a long time, and the Secretary's remarks should be read in that context.

QUESTION: But --

MR. ERELI: And that the threat posed by Iran and the nature of the Iranian program is unique and distinct from other cases.

QUESTION: Does the State Department share the view of the -- share the view of officials who are quoted this morning that that information that the Secretary was referring to was not entirely backed up and solid?

MR. ERELI: No. The State Department stands by the comments of the Secretary and believes --and what the Secretary said is valid and stands up.

QUESTION: Well, I realize that -- what the Secretary said. But what the Secretary said was that he had seen information. Now, is that what you're trying to defend? Is that what you're saying --

MR. ERELI: I'm not trying to defend anything.

QUESTION: -- that he had seen this information?

MR. ERELI: I'm not trying to defend anything. I am trying to tell you is -- what I'm tell --

QUESTION: Well, you just said the State Department stands by what the Secretary said. And what I'm trying to get at is that, do you stand by the actual words that the Secretary said --

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: -- or the import behind them?

MR. ERELI: Both.

QUESTION: Both.

MR. ERELI: Both.

QUESTION: So you disagree then with these people who are quoted this morning as saying that this intelligence is wishy-washy and not --

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: May I follow, Adam? Can you confirm something? One, if Iran's nuclear program is connected in any way with A.Q. Khan; and, two, there was a report that Iran is capable of making a bomb within a year; and finally, if Iran, at any time, or U.S. or any European allies made a statement or any agreement that Iran is willing to give up or dismantle its nuclear program on conditions?

MR. ERELI: I'm not aware of any agreement by Iran to dismantle its program under conditions.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) Libya?

MR. ERELI: No, there is no such -- I have not seen any such offer. On the question of A.Q. Khan, I don't have any information to share with you about the connection between A.Q. Khan and Iran. I would tell you that, obviously, Pakistan has acted, I think, decisively to break up and dismantle the A.Q. Khan network or working to find out where its tentacles reach; and that, obviously, this A.Q. Khan network has had connections with other countries and it's certainly a subject of interest but I don't have anything specific to share with you on it.

And your -- the third question was?

QUESTION: Within a year, a bomb, is going to make -- Iran is going to make a bomb within a year.

MR. ERELI: There is a lot of different, I guess, analysis and thought being given to that subject, but I don't have a considered judgment to share with you.

QUESTION: And finally, let's say Iran really doesn't agree with IAEA or global pressure, UN pressure and all that, just like Libya was doing in the beginning. And where do we stand now, because the threat is growing from Iran and also there is a resolution by the candidates in the UN about the human rights violations or people are suffering in Iran as far as human rights are concerned. So what I'm saying is, is U.S. going to take action, military action or, and if Iran doesn't agree on any conditions?

MR. ERELI: Military action is not something that we're talking about. We have said quite clearly that we are committed to dealing with this threat through multilateral diplomacy, and that remains our position.

QUESTION: And human rights violations?

MR. ERELI: Human rights violations are a constant, recurring concern of ours. We speak to the matter publicly, we work with others to try to address the problem, and it remains an issue.

QUESTION: Speaking of multilateral diplomacy, Adam, can I move to Iraq for a second?

MR. ERELI: Are we done with Iran?

Yes.

QUESTION: No, Adam -- to complicate matters even more, there was a later report this morning about -- out of Vienna, diplomats are saying that the Iranians are hurrying up to produce this gas and then another diplomat came out and said this first diplomat might be confusing the two. Do you have any information on what these diplomats are talking about?

MR. ERELI: We've seen reports of UH-6 production going on in Iran. I can't substantiate them. Obviously, they are of concern. If true, that would yet again raise serious concerns about Iranian good faith and intentions. It was our understanding that the November 14th agreement between Iran and the EU-3 required the immediate suspension of enrichment activities. And so we will be consulting with the Europeans and other Board of Governors on this issue. These allegations only heighten our concerns that Iran continues to pursue nuclear activities and does not honor its commitments. [...]

CIA

Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, 1 July Through 31 December 2003

Gepubliceerd op 23 november 2004

[...] Acquisition by Country

As required by Section 721 of the FY 1997 Intelligence Authorization Act, the following are country summaries of acquisition activities (solicitations, negotiations, contracts, and deliveries) related to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and advanced conventional weapons (ACW) that occurred from 1 July through 31 December 2003. We have excluded countries that already have established WMD and ACW programs, as well as countries that demonstrated little WMD acquisition activity of concern.

Iran

Iran continued to vigorously pursue indigenous programs to produce nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. Iran is also working to improve delivery systems as well as ACW. To this end, Iran continued to seek foreign materials, training, equipment, and know-how. During the reporting period, Iran still focused particularly on entities in Russia, China, North Korea, and Europe. Iran's nuclear program received significant assistance in the past from the proliferation network headed by Pakistani scientist A.Q. Khan.

Nuclear. The United States remains convinced that Tehran has been pursuing a clandestine nuclear weapons program, in contradiction to its obligations as a party to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). During 2003, Iran continued to pursue an indigenous nuclear fuel cycle ostensibly for civilian purposes but with clear weapons potential. International scrutiny and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections and safeguards will most likely prevent Tehran from using facilities declared to the IAEA directly for its weapons program as long as Tehran remains a party to the NPT. However, Iran could use the same technology at other, covert locations for military applications.

Iran continues to use its civilian nuclear energy program to justify its efforts to establish domestically or otherwise acquire the entire nuclear fuel cycle. Iran claims that this fuel cycle would be used to produce fuel for nuclear power reactors, such as the 1,000-megawatt light-water reactor that Russia is continuing to build at the southern port city of Bushehr. However, Iran does not need to produce its own fuel for this reactor because Russia has pledged to provide the fuel throughout the operating lifetime of the reactor and is negotiating with Iran to take back the irradiated spent fuel. An Iranian opposition group, beginning in August of 2002, revealed several previously undisclosed Iranian nuclear facilities, sparking numerous IAEA inspections since February 2003. Subsequent reports by the IAEA Director General revealed numerous failures by Iran to disclose facilities and activities, which run contrary to its IAEA safeguards obligations. Before the reporting period, the A. Q. Khan network provided Iran with designs for Pakistan's older centrifuges, as well as designs for more advanced and efficient models, and components.

The November 2003 report of the IAEA Director General (DG) to the Board of Governors describes a pattern of Iranian safeguards breaches, including the failure to: report the import and chemical conversion of uranium compounds, report the separation of plutonium from irradiated uranium targets, report the enrichment of uranium using both centrifuges and lasers, and provide design information for numerous fuel cycle facilities. In October 2003, Iran sent a report to the DG providing additional detail on its nuclear program and signed an agreement with the United Kingdom, France, and Germany that included an Iranian

promise to suspend all enrichment and reprocessing efforts. On 18 December 2003, Iran signed the Additional Protocol (AP) to its IAEA Safeguards Agreement but took no steps to ratify the Protocol during this reporting period.

Ballistic Missile. Ballistic missile-related cooperation from entities in the former Soviet Union, North Korea, and China over the years has helped Iran move toward its goal of becoming self-sufficient in the production of ballistic missiles. Such assistance during 2003 continued to include equipment, technology, and expertise. Iran's ballistic missile inventory is among the largest in the Middle East and includes some 1,300-km-range Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and a few hundred short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs)-including the Shahab-1 (Scud-B), Shahab-2 (Scud C), and Tondar-69 (CSS-8)-as well as a variety of large unguided rockets. Already producing Scud SRBMs, Iran announced that it had begun production of the Shahab-3 MRBM and a new solid-propellant SRBM, the Fateh-110. In addition, Iran publicly acknowledged the development of follow-on versions of the Shahab-3. It originally said that another version, the Shahab-4, was a more capable ballistic missile than its predecessor but later characterized it as solely a space launch vehicle with no military applications. Iran is also pursuing longer-range ballistic missiles.

Chemical. Iran is a party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC). Nevertheless, during the reporting period it continued to seek production technology, training, and expertise from foreign entities that could further Tehran's efforts to achieve an indigenous capability to produce nerve agents. Iran may have already stockpiled blister, blood, choking, and possibly nerve agents-and the bombs and artillery shells to deliver them-which it previously had manufactured.

Biological. Even though Iran is part of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Tehran probably maintained an offensive BW program. Iran continued to seek dual-use biotechnical materials, equipment, and expertise that could be used in Tehran's BW program. Iran probably has the capability to produce at least small quantities of BW agents.

Advanced Conventional Weapons. Iran continued to seek and acquire conventional weapons and production technologies, primarily from Russia, China, and North Korea. Tehran also sought high-quality products, particularly weapons components and dual-use items, or products that proved difficult to acquire through normal governmental channels.

[...]

Key suppliers

Russia

[...]

Nuclear. Russia continues to play a key role in constructing light-water nuclear power reactors in Iran, China, and India. Moscow has pledged to supply fuel to the Bushehr reactor in Iran for the life of the reactor and is negotiating with Iran to sign an agreement on the return of the irradiated spent fuel to Russia.

Ballistic Missile. Russian entities during the reporting period continued to supply a variety of ballistic missile-related goods and technical know-how to countries such as Iran, India, and China. Iran's earlier success in gaining technology and materials from Russian entities helped accelerate Iranian development of the Shahab-3 MRBM, and continuing Russian entity assistance has supported Iranian efforts to develop new missiles and increase Tehran's self-sufficiency in missile production.

[...]

Other countries

[...]

Although West European countries strove to tighten export control regulations, Iran continued to successfully procure dual-use goods and materials from Europe. [...]

BERICHTEN

Gulf Daily News

Nuclear deal 'is victory for Iran'

18 November 2004

TEHRAN: Iran's President Mohammad Khatami said yesterday Iran had won "a great victory" when it eased fears it was secretly building atomic arms by suspending activities related to its uranium enrichment programme.

Countering one conservative politician's comment that Iran had "traded a pearl for a candy bar", Khatami said Iran secured its right to nuclear technology.

"It was a great victory for us that the European Union officially admitted Iran's entitlement to its rights," he said after a cabinet meeting.

Khatami said both parties should stand by the bargain, stressing a suspension was contingent on the EU nations not backing US calls for UN Security Council sanctions.

On Sunday, Iran agreed with France, Britain and Germany to suspend uranium enrichment and processing activities to help dispel international fears it is seeking atomic warheads.

The enrichment suspension is intended to last for as long as it takes to hammer out a finalised understanding on how far Iran can develop its nuclear technology.

Enriched uranium can be used to fuel nuclear power stations such as the one Iran is building at Bushehr on its south coast, but if enriched further can be deployed in nuclear warheads.

Iran is adamant it must be allowed to develop its own fuel cycle, mining uranium ore in its central desert. But Washington fears that would give Iran a "break-out" capacity to develop arms.

"We did not accept a halt in uranium enrichment. We only accepted a suspension," Khatami said.

Conservatives have been arguing that Iran has been forced into surrendering its rights, and some have said Iran should enrich uranium regardless of international wishes.

Possible conservative presidential candidate Ali Larijani was quoted in newspapers as saying Iran had been cheated in the deal, "trading a pearl for a candy bar".

But nuclear negotiator Hossein Mousavian said the agreement had the green light from the highest authority in Iran.

"Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was directly and fully supervising all nuclear policies from the beginning," he told the official Irna news agency.

"Within three to four months at the most, we should reach a stage where we have an overall conclusion. If they come to no conclusion or say the only visible guarantee would be to halt enrichment altogether, Iran will not accept this," he told state television.

Associated Press

U.S.-Iran Talks on Nukes May Be Ruled Out

by Barry Schweid – 18 November 2004

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration is not considering talks with Iran on developing nuclear weapons even though Secretary of State Colin Powell will attend a conference next week with diplomats from Iran and other countries.

Already suspicious that Iran is developing such weapons, the administration now has intelligence provided by a resistance group that Iran is trying to adapt missiles to deliver the weapons, Powell said Wednesday.

"I have seen some information that would agree that they have been actively working on delivery systems," Powell said en route to an Asia-Pacific economic summit meeting in Chile.

Powell plans to attend a conference on Iraq on Monday and Tuesday at Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheik. Representatives from Iran are expected, too.

A State Department spokesman, Adam Ereli, was asked about the possibility that Powell would raise his concerns directly with Iranian diplomats. "This is a purely speculative question," Ereli said Thursday. "I am not aware that that possibility is being considered."

Joseph Cirincione, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said "many people assumed this was the perfect opportunity for Secretary Powell to informally negotiate with the Iranians."

Britain, France and Germany have struck a deal with Iran that is designed to stop the nuclear enrichment program. If the United States does not join in the agreement, "the deal is dead," he said. "Only the U.S. can give Iran the security guarantees it needs," Cirincione said.

The deal is supposed to take effect Monday.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the private Arms Control Association, said the administration must decide whether "it will further complicate or complement" the European Union's effort. "By failing to engage in a dialogue with Iran, the administration is missing a strategic opportunity to exploit the EU-Iran opening."

Anthony Cordesman, a defense analyst at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said he did not believe the United States thinks it can stop a covert nuclear weapons program by Iran.

He noted that Powell, who is leaving the administration, is a lame duck. "He cannot speak for the president" if he were to meet with the Iranians in Egypt, Cordesman said, and Iran "must perceive him as distant from the president on this and other issues."

White House spokesman Scott McClellan renewed demands that Iran stop enriching uranium, a key ingredient of nuclear weapons production. "They have spent quite a bit of time over the years hiding their program and their intentions," he said.

The United States intends to take the nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council after the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency meets Nov. 25.

It is unclear whether the United States can win approval for economic and diplomatic penalties against Iran. "We have seen this thing before," Ereli said. "They (the Iranians) have had a deal with the European Union to suspend enrichment. They broke it."

Washington Post

Nuclear Disclosures on Iran Unverified

By Dafna Linzer – 19 November 2004

Secretary of State Colin L. Powell shared information with reporters Wednesday about Iran's nuclear program that was classified and based on an unvetted, single source who provided information that two U.S. officials said yesterday was highly significant if true but has not yet been verified.

Powell and other senior Cabinet members were briefed last week on the sensitive intelligence. The material was stamped "No Foreign," meaning it was not to be shared with allies, although President Bush decided that portions could be shared last week with British Prime Minister Tony Blair, officials said.

According to one official with access to the material, a "walk-in" source approached U.S. intelligence earlier this month with more than 1,000 pages purported to be Iranian drawings and technical documents, including a nuclear warhead design and modifications to enable Iranian ballistic missiles to deliver an atomic strike. The official agreed to discuss the information on the condition of anonymity and only because Powell had alluded to it publicly.

But U.S. intelligence officials have been combing the information carefully and with a wary eye, mindful of the mistakes made in trusting intelligence information alleging that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. Powell, who announced earlier this week that he would not stay on for a second term, presented that intelligence in a February 2003 speech to the U.N. Security Council that was meant to convince the world that Saddam Hussein needed to be forcefully removed from power. Much of his presentation turned out to be based on information provided by unreliable sources.

If the information on Iran were confirmed, it would mean the Islamic republic is further along than previously known in developing a nuclear weapon and the means to deliver it. The documents included a specific warhead design based on implosion and adjustments aimed at outfitting the warhead on existing Iranian missile systems.

U.S. intelligence has known since at least 2002 that Iran was capable of enriching uranium, the key ingredient in a nuclear bomb. Iran also has a successful missile program. But U.N. nuclear inspectors who have been investigating Iran for nearly two years have found no evidence that Tehran possesses a nuclear warhead design or is conducting a nuclear weapons program.

The Islamic republic, which on Sunday entered into a new deal with France, Britain and Germany to suspend its nuclear program, has denied it is trying to build atomic weapons and insists its work is part of a budding energy effort.

Western intelligence estimates of Iran's capabilities vary. But U.S. officials believe Iran could be three to five years from completing a bomb if it is successful at constructing and operating thousands of highly sophisticated centrifuge parts for enriching uranium.

The information provided by the source, who was not previously known to U.S. intelligence, does not mention uranium or any other area of Iran's known nuclear program, according to the official with access to the material. It focuses instead on a warhead design and modifications to Iran's long-range Shahab-3 missile and a medium-range missile in its arsenal. The Shahab-3 has a range of 800 miles and is capable of hitting Israel.

The official said the CIA remains unsure about the authenticity of the documents and how they came into the informant's possession. A second official would say only that there are questions about the source of the information.

Officials interviewed by The Washington Post did not know the identity of the source or whether the individual is connected to an Iranian exile group that made fresh accusations about Iran at a news conference Wednesday in Paris. The National Council for Resistance in Iran charged that Iran was enriching uranium and will continue to do so despite the pledge made Sunday to European foreign ministers.

The group also claimed that Iran received blueprints for a Chinese-made bomb in the mid-1990s from the global nuclear network led by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan. The group, which is considered a terrorist organization by the State Department, exposed a secret Iranian enrichment facility in 2002, but many of its claims have been inaccurate.

The lack of certainty about the source who approached U.S. intelligence had kept officials from talking publicly about the information, and Powell's comments caught the small group of informed officials by surprise and angered some of them.

Powell's remarks also drew expressions of concern from European allies who just days earlier had entered into an agreement with Iran to suspend work on its nuclear program. Even if the documents are authentic, Iran's possessing them would not by itself violate international law, officials said. And the information was not enough to stop British officials from signing the agreement with Iran.

Yesterday, in an effort to assuage European concerns, the administration told diplomats from those countries that Powell misspoke in releasing information that had not yet been verified, sources said. During a conversation about Iran with reporters accompanying him on a trip to Chile on Wednesday, Powell said he had "seen some information that would suggest that they have been actively working on delivery systems. I'm not talking about uranium or fissile material or the warhead, I'm talking about what one does with a warhead."

Powell's spokesman said yesterday that the secretary stood by those remarks. "The secretary did not misspeak," said State Department spokesman J. Adam Ereli, who added that Powell's deputy, Richard L. Armitage, "saw the same information."

Ereli did not elaborate on the nature of Powell's comments at his daily briefing. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said only that "Powell was talking about intelligence that we have seen, that's what he was referring to."

Meanwhile, senior State Department officials traveling with Powell in Santiago, Chile, said yesterday that President Bush will appeal to Asian leaders this weekend to intercede with North Korea to return to deadlocked talks on its nuclear weapons program.

Bush will press allied leaders of China, Japan, South Korea and Russia -- partners with the United States for more than a year in negotiations to disarm Pyongyang -- on the sidelines of the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Chile. The Bush administration believes North Korea may be more willing to reconsider rejoining the six-party talks now that the U.S. presidential election is over, the officials said.

With limited alternatives, U.S. officials hope the president's personal intervention will impress allies to try once again to prod North Korea. "Bush's meetings with leaders are going to be quite significant in stating his own commitment to the six-party process," said a senior State Department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive diplomacy.

The diplomatic effort has been in trouble since Kim Jong Il's government boycotted a planned session of the six-party talks in September. The Bush administration believes North Korea was waiting to see the fate of Democratic candidate John F. Kerry, who had proposed the kind of direct talks the Clinton administration tried in 2000.

Japan and South Korea have offered economic and energy incentives as part of the package to win North Korea's compliance. But North Korea had been holding out for additional incentives, including the prospect of one-on-one talks with the United States, as conditions to resume negotiations.

MSNBC News

Diplomats say Iran making gas used in nukes

Move seen as way to stockpile ahead of Monday deadline

19 November 2004

VIENNA, Austria - Iran is using the last few days before it must stop all uranium enrichment to produce significant quantities of a gas that can be used to make nuclear weapons, diplomats said Friday.

NBC News has learned that the U.N. nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, will be reporting to the world next week that Iran is still producing the gas, a violation of Tehran's promises to European nations that it would freeze nuclear fuel production.

"The Iranians are producing UF₆ (uranium hexafluoride) like hell," a diplomat on the governing board of the IAEA told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The machines are running."

Other diplomatic sources made similar comments to the Associated Press, saying the gas is being produced at facilities in Isfahan. When introduced into centrifuges and spun, the substance can be enriched into weapons-grade uranium that forms the core of nuclear warheads.

Iran last week agreed to suspend uranium enrichment and all related activities in a deal worked out with Britain, France, Germany and the European Union. The deal, which takes effect Monday, prohibits Iran from all uranium gas processing activities.

But the diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Iran was exploiting the window until Monday to produce uranium hexafluoride at its plant in the central city of Isfahan.

Asked about quantities, one diplomat said, "it's not little," but he declined to elaborate.

Iran has huge reserves of raw uranium and has announced plans to extract more than 40 tons a year.

That amount, converted to uranium hexafluoride and repeatedly spun in centrifuges, theoretically could yield more than 200 pounds of weapons-grade highly enriched uranium, enough for about five crude nuclear weapons.

Iranian officials say the Isfahan plant can convert more than 300 tons of uranium ore a year.

In a note of caution, one Vienna-based diplomat told NBC News that the reports of the stepped-up production did not make sense because inspectors will soon be in Iran and they will be able to report on the activity.

Iran, however, is not prohibited from making uranium hexafluoride until the deal takes force.

U.S. vs. Europe

But its decision to carry out uranium processing right up to the freeze deadline was expected to disappoint the Europeans — and give the United States ammunition in its push to have the U.N. Security Council examine Tehran's nuclear activities.

Washington says Iran wants to enrich uranium to make weapons. Tehran says it is interested only in low-grade enriched uranium for nuclear power.

Iran announced suspension of enrichment last week, and the agency said it would police that commitment starting next week, ahead of the Nov. 25 IAEA board meeting.

Although the deal commits Iran to suspension only while a comprehensive aid agreement with the EU is finalized, the pledge reduced Washington's hopes of having the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency refer Iran to the Security Council when the board meets Thursday.

By opting to freeze — and not scrap — the program, Tehran has not dropped plans to run 50,000 centrifuges to enrich uranium for what it says will be the fuel requirements of a nuclear reactor to be finished next year.

It currently possesses less than 1,000 centrifuges. But even with 1,500 centrifuges, experts say, Iran would be able to make enough weapons-grade uranium for about a bomb a year.

Exile group ties Pakistani to Iran

An exiled Iranian opposition group on Wednesday claimed that Iran obtained weapons-grade uranium and a nuclear bomb design from a Pakistani scientist who has admitted to selling nuclear secrets abroad.

The group, which has given accurate information before, also said Iran is secretly enriching uranium at a military site previously unknown to the United Nations, despite promising France, Britain and Germany that it would halt all such work.

"(Abdul Qadeer) Khan gave Iran a quantity of HEU (highly enriched uranium) in 2001, so they already have some," Farid Soleiman, a spokesman for the National Council of Resistance of Iran, told reporters.

"I would doubt it was given enough for a weapon," he added.

Soleiman said Iran wanted a bomb by the middle of next year. Israel estimates Iran will be "nuclear capable" in 2007.

U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell later said that he had "seen intelligence which would corroborate what this dissident group is saying" about Iran trying to fit missiles to carry nuclear weapons.

Iran on Friday called the allegations by Powell and the exile group "baseless."

Soleiman said Khan, who ran a global nuclear black market from Pakistan until it was shut down earlier this year, also gave Iran a Chinese-developed warhead design sometime between 1994 and 1996.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has said Khan's network gave the bomb design to Libya, and investigators are trying to find out whether Iran got it, too.

Arrests in Iran on spy charges

Iran charged four people on Wednesday with spying on its atomic sites, state television reported.

"These are established figures, which makes it hard to believe they were spies," the television added, but gave no further hints as to their identity.

Iran said in August it had arrested dozens of spies, several of them for passing on nuclear secrets. It was unclear whether the four were among these.

IranMania

Russia seeks nuke cooperation with Iran

19 November 2004

LONDON, Nov 19 - Russia wishes to participate actively in Iran's peaceful nuclear programme in due conformity with international commitments, the secretary of the national security council was quoted as saying Thursday.

"Russia intends to participate actively in the development of civil nuclear energy in Iran in line with international obligations," Russian news agencies quoted Igor Ivanov as telling his Iranian equivalent Hassan Rohani by telephone.

Iran has informed Russia of the terms of an agreement reached with France, Germany and Britain -- on behalf of the European Union -- on the controversy of Iranian nuclear power.

Iran agreed to suspend uranium enrichment in order to defuse international concern about its nuclear programme -- seen by the United States as a cover for an atomic weapons drive.

The deal brokered by the EU three offered Iran trade, security and technological incentives in return for its cooperation.

Tehran asserts that it only wants to generate atomic energy in order to meet booming domestic power demand and free up its vast oil and gas resources for export.

RIA Novosti news agency reported that Russia had expressed satisfaction at the accord with the western powers, saying it would help to normalise the Iran's situation.

Moscow is in the process of completing Iran's first nuclear power plant, although it has refused to provide fuel for the project until it guarantees its safe return to Russia for reprocessing.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said in September his Islamic state was pushing forward with nuclear cooperation with Russia despite protests from the West.

He said the reactor in the southern Iranian town of Bushehr would go ahead despite resistance from the United States and Israel.

New York Times

Iran Denies Having Secret Nuclear Plan

by Nazila Fathi – 19 November 2004

TEHRAN, Nov. 18 - The Iranian government on Thursday vehemently denied accusations by an exiled dissident group that it was running a secret nuclear operation on the outskirts of Tehran.

The opposition group, the National Council for Resistance in Iran, said Wednesday in news conferences in Paris and Vienna that Iran was not only hiding a uranium enrichment facility but had obtained on the black market a small amount of weapons-grade uranium and blueprints for building a nuclear weapon.

"These allegations are aimed at ruining the positive environment for Iran before the next board of I.A.E.A.'s meeting," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamidreza Assefi, according to a report by ISNA, the student news agency.

Hossein Mousavian, a senior diplomat and nuclear negotiator, also denied the group's assertions and said Iran had declared all its sites to the United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, or I.A.E.A.

"We have always responded positively to the agency's request for inspection and have always cooperated," he said.

The agency is expected to meet on Nov. 25 to review Iran's case.

Los Angeles Times

Powell's Talk of Arms Has Fallout

By Sonni Efron, Tyler Marshall and Bob Drogin – 19 November 2004

WASHINGTON — Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's statement that Iran is actively studying how to outfit a missile with a nuclear bomb caused surprise and confusion in Washington on Thursday, and members of Congress demanded that he provide more details.

Powell's remarks Wednesday — apparently unscripted and based on classified information — appeared to catch the Bush administration and its European allies off-guard. The CIA refused to comment, and the White House and State Department declined to offer details. Some sources raised questions about the credibility of the intelligence.

In Santiago, Chile, where Powell is attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference, he downplayed the furor in a Chilean television interview Thursday, saying Iran's ambitions were well known.

"They shouldn't be brand-new ... issues," Powell said. "They shouldn't surprise anybody. I think the Iranians still have much more to do to convince the international community that they are not moving into the direction of a nuclear weapon."

One source, however, described the intelligence mentioned by Powell as "weak."

Some administration officials "were surprised he went public on something that was weak and, because it was weak, was not supposed to be used," the source said.

One senior Democrat on the House International Relations Committee said Iran's efforts to build nuclear weapons and mount them on missiles have been known for years, but the United States faces new hurdles in making its case to the world.

"After crying wolf for so long about Iraq, how are we going to have any credibility on this?" said Rep. Gary L. Ackerman of New York, who recently returned from a trip to the Middle East. "People in the Arab world won't believe it and say we have a bad track record and just want to invade another country in the Middle East."

Ackerman added: "How do we expect anybody to believe us, even if we know it's true? This is the disaster we created for ourselves in lying about Iraq."

En route to Chile, Powell told reporters Wednesday that the Iranians "were working actively on missile systems. You don't have a weapon until you can put it in something that can deliver a weapon."

"We are talking about information that says they not only have missiles but information that suggests they are working hard about how to put the two together," said Powell, who will leave his government post soon.

On Thursday, a senior State Department official denied that Powell's remarks were linked to delicate negotiations before Thursday's meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, where Iran's nuclear program will be discussed. The official, who asked not to be named, said Powell was simply answering reporters' questions about the status of Iran's nuclear weapons program.

But the source who called the intelligence weak said that other administration officials scrambled to try to explain to allies what Powell meant and underscore that Washington did not intend to undermine the deal France, Germany and Britain struck with Iran on Sunday under which Tehran agreed to a temporary freeze of its uranium enrichment program.

An ambassador from one of the three European nations said the IAEA was the best forum for exploring Iran's nuclear activities, suggesting Powell should share any new information with that agency.

"We hope all the relevant information will be made available to the IAEA for consideration and verification," said the ambassador, asking that his country not be named. "We Europeans are strongly in favor of total transparency and full verification of all relevant nuclear activities conducted by Iran."

Arms control experts, including those who have access to intelligence on Iran, said they were not sure whether Powell was asserting that the U.S. had fresh information or a "smoking gun" to support its long-held conclusion that Iran was actively working on nuclear weapons.

The United States has long claimed that Iran was trying to develop nuclear warheads and improve its long-range Shahab-3 missiles to deliver them. Experts who follow the Iranian program, including some with access to classified data, said Thursday that they had no evidence but were inclined to believe Powell's statement that Iran is "working hard ... to put the two together."

However, members of Congress and two former arms inspectors warned that U.S. credibility was at stake in light of the Bush administration's failure to back up its claims that Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq maintained illicit nuclear and biological arms programs.

Several officials were surprised that Powell was not more circumspect about the intelligence on Iran, given that his statements about Iraq to the United Nations Security Council in 2003 have been discredited.

"I was surprised the administration put him out there or he put himself out there on this," said David Kay, the former head of the U.S. weapons search team in Iraq. "I thought if there was anyone in the administration that had been sufficiently burned by such sources, it would be Powell."

In a letter, Reps. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) asked Powell to provide Congress with an assessment of the state of Iranian nuclear weapons programs and delivery systems. They also demanded that the U.S. give IAEA weapons inspectors "full access to the intelligence that forms the basis for any conclusion that Iran is actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program."

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said he couldn't "get into discussing any of the intelligence that [Powell was] referring to, beyond what he said." John Pike, a missile expert who runs the independent website GlobalSecurity.org, said recent intelligence indicates that Iran has obtained a key device, "a new nosecone" for its Shahab-3 medium-range missile.

The Times reported last year that the North Koreans were assisting Iran in designing a nuclear warhead. A foreign intelligence official said at the time that high-ranking North Korean military personnel had been seen at some Iranian nuclear installations. Sources also told The Times that a hotel in Tehran was reserved for the North Koreans and a resort on the Caspian Sea northwest of Tehran had been set aside for their use.

Iranian opposition groups, however, say Tehran may have obtained a Chinese warhead design from Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani nuclear scientist who sold nuclear technology to Libya and other countries.

Leonard Spector, deputy director in Washington of the Monterey Institute's Center for Nonproliferation Studies in Washington, said Powell's disclosure suggested the administration was warning that even if Iran halted its efforts to produce fissile material for a nuclear bomb, it might continue to build a warhead.

"What Powell is saying is we may have one part of the program under control, but there's another part now to watch," Spector said.

Under the deal with the three European countries, Tehran agreed to a temporary halt to uranium enrichment in exchange for trade concessions. The pact makes it unlikely that the IAEA will refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council for action, as the U.S. has advocated.

CNN

Source of Powell's Iran intelligence under scrutiny

19 November 2004

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The source of intelligence used this week by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell to suggest Iran is working on a nuclear weapons program may not be reliable, knowledgeable sources told CNN Friday.

The issue surfaced when The National Council of Resistance of Iran -- which is on the U.S. State Department's list of terrorist organizations --revealed satellite photographs this week it said showed a hidden nuclear plant in Iran, allegations the Iranians denied.

"This allegation is timed to coincide with the next meeting of the board of governors of the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency]," Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Hussein Moussavian, said. "And every time just before the meeting there are these kind of allegations either from the United States or terrorist groups. And every time these allegations have proven to be false."

Powell, en route to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Santiago, Chile, told reporters he had seen intelligence that appears to "corroborate" the resistance group's information.

And the State Department stands by Powell's comments, saying the information he cited offered a "firm basis for his remarks."

"The secretary did not misspeak," deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said. "The secretary knows exactly what he was talking about. And there should be, I think, no question in our mind of casting doubt or walking it back."

"We believe there's solid information to substantiate clandestine Iranian efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems, and this is something we've been saying for quite some time," Ereli said, adding that the United States is on "very very solid ground" in pointing to such efforts.

A senior State Department official also said the department "stands by the information and the conclusion" reached by the information Powell referred to in his remarks.

"Those who have seen it have expressed confidence that, A, it is valid and, B, the critics taking issue with it don't know what they are talking about," the official said. "What the secretary said was backed up by strong information that gives us confidence in his conclusion."

The official also said Powell was "not talking about one specific piece of data," but rather was trying to "paint the big picture" about the concerns regarding the nuclear program.

Some U.S. officials were angered by a report in Friday's edition of The Washington Post which quotes two sources who said Powell used information that was classified, and from a single unvetted source.

The Post article said the information Powell shared with reporters came from a "walk-in" source who approached U.S. intelligence and may or may not be reliable.

While declining to say whether the Post account was accurate, one U.S. official said "public discussion of the details of the human source of intelligence is irresponsible and a remarkably bad idea."

The official called it "disturbing" that other officials would discuss sources and methods in any detail with a journalist.

Analysts say the CIA may ask the Justice Department to investigate the leak.

Intelligence insiders question whether the leak could have come from their community, which traditionally guards information about sources and methods very carefully.

The intelligence upon which Powell based his comments to reporters was disseminated to a range of officials at the State Department, the White House, and the Pentagon, among other entities.

A British source also said his government was aware of the information.

The Post reported that the "walk-in" source delivered "more than 1,000 pages purported to be Iranian drawings and technical documents, including a nuclear warhead design and modifications to enable Iranian ballistic missiles to deliver an atomic strike."

Before the Post story appeared, Powell discussed his Wednesday comment with Chilean television.

"Now, I made a statement yesterday that said we had some information," Powell said. "I've seen some information, and the dissidents have put out more information, that suggests that the Iranians are also working on the designs one would have to have for putting such a warhead into a missile."

"This shouldn't be brand-new news. This shouldn't surprise anybody. If they had been working on a nuclear weapon and design a warhead, certainly they were also trying to figure out how they would deliver such a warhead."

In October, Iran said it could mass produce the Shahab-3 missile, capable of hitting Israel and U.S. forces in the Mideast, although it insisted that the missiles were only for defensive purposes. Reports at the time said the missile was capable of carrying a conventional or nonconventional warhead.

Powell, who has submitted his resignation and will not serve in the second Bush administration, said the Iranians need to "convince the international community that they are not moving in the direction of a nuclear weapon, and they will comply with their obligations to the IAEA."

Guardian

Fresh suspicion over Iran's nuclear aims

by Ian Traynor and Suzanne Goldenberg – 20 November 2004

A breakthrough deal between Iran and the EU aimed at defusing an international crisis over Tehran's alleged nuclear ambitions was thrown into uncertainty last night when diplomats said Iran was rushing to process feed material for the manufacture of bomb-grade uranium.

Only days after Tehran sealed an agreement with the EU over its nuclear activities and days before a crucial meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna about Iran, diplomats monitoring the issue said Tehran was "going flat out" to convert tonnes of uranium concentrate into uranium hexafluoride, the gas that is centrifuged for enrichment into nuclear fuel or for nuclear warheads.

"It's outrageous," said one well-placed non-American diplomat in Vienna, adding that the move could wreck a delicate agreement that took the heat off Iran, effectively calling a truce in the two-year dispute.

Another European diplomat in Vienna said the Iranians had started manufacturing the uranium gas on Thursday and were going as fast as possible to process the uranium before a deadline on Monday for a complete freeze on all activities connected with uranium enrichment.

Uranium enrichment is the key to making a nuclear bomb. Iran has a sophisticated enrichment programme which it insists is designed purely for power plants it does not have and will not have for years. But under the deal with Britain, Germany and France reached last Sunday, Iran is to suspend all enrichment activities next week and IAEA inspectors are to verify the freeze.

This week the IAEA chief, Mohammed El Baradei, circulated a broadly positive report on Iran's nuclear programme ahead of next week's meeting of the 35-strong IAEA board that had been expected to result in a victory for Iran and a defeat for US hawks pressing to have Tehran penalised for its breaches of international nuclear commitments.

That scenario was upset by last night's reports. The information on the uranium hexafluoride came from IAEA inspectors, diplomats said, although other sources close to the IAEA believed there was some confusion over the science of uranium enrichment.

Under the agreement with the EU, Iran is to be allowed to convert uranium concentrate into uranium tetrafluoride, an intermediate stage in uranium enrichment, but not to hexafluoride, which is the final stage before feeding the gas into centrifuges for enrichment.

In the El Baradei report circulated on Monday, the IAEA chief said that Iran had informed him last Sunday that the IAEA could "coordinate" all conversion of uranium and that such conversion would not proceed beyond uranium tetrafluoride. As of last month, Mr El Baradei said, the agency's inspectors had found that no uranium concentrate was being turned into uranium hexafluoride.

"This makes no sense," said one source. "Why would they risk their deal with the EU three days before it comes into force?"

If confirmed, the move is certain to upset the cautious optimism about containing the problem.

The reports of uranium hexafluoride conversion were denied categorically in Tehran last night.

The development could also play into the hands of hawks in Washington, where the drumbeat for regime change has only intensified with the EU-brokered deal. Administration hawks dismiss the agreement as a sham.

This week the Bush administration said Iran was actively trying to develop a missile delivery system for a nuclear bomb. The outgoing secretary of state, Colin Powell, told reporters: "We are talking about information that says they not only have missiles but information that suggests they are working hard about how to put the two together."

Pentagon turns heat up on Iran

Washington and European Union on collision course over how to neutralise Tehran's nuclear capabilities
by Peter Beaumont and Gaby Hinsliff – 21 November 2004

Pentagon hawks have begun discussing military action against Iran to neutralise its nuclear weapons threat, including possible strikes on leadership, political and security targets.

With a deadline of tomorrow for Iran to begin an agreed freeze on enriching uranium, which can be used to produce nuclear weapons, sources have disclosed that the latest Pentagon gaming model for 'neutralising' Iran's nuclear threat involves strikes in support of regime change.

Although the United States has made clear that it would seek sanctions against Iran through the United Nations should it not meet its obligations, rather than undertake military action, the new modelling at the Pentagon, with its shift in emphasis from suspected nuclear to political target lists, is causing deep anxiety among officials in the UK, France and Germany.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is due to meet on Thursday to decide whether to refer Iran to the UN Security Council for being in breach of non-proliferation measures.

Sources close to the Bush administration have warned that Tony Blair will have to choose between the EU's pursuit of the diplomatic track and a more hardline approach from the White House.

While George Bush clearly favours more stick and less carrot, it is not yet clear what the stick might be: US administration sources say targeted air strikes - either by the US or Israel - aimed at wiping out Iran's fledgling nuclear programme would be difficult because of a lack of clear intelligence about where key components are located.

Despite America's attempt to turn up the heat on Iran, analysts remain deeply uncertain whether the increasingly bellicose noises which are coming from Bush administration figures represent a crude form of 'megaphone' diplomacy designed to scare Iran into sticking to its side of the bargain, or evidence that Washington is leaning towards a new military adventure.

Details of the emerging Pentagon thinking have come as US officials have spent the past week turning up the pressure on Iran before the deal comes into force.

US officials are expected to meet European diplomats and IAEA officials to complain about Iran's continuing production of substantial quantities of uranium hexafluoride, which can be used in a weapons programme.

Although not explicitly barred in the accord, US officials believe it amounts to a serious show of bad faith by Iran.

Speaking on the fringes of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum meeting in Santiago yesterday, Bush ratcheted up the pressure on Iran.

'It is very important for the Iran government to hear that we are concerned about their desires and we're concerned about reports that show that, before a certain international meeting, they're willing to speed up the processing of materials that could lead to a nuclear weapon,' Bush said.

Referring to the European countries that negotiated the deal with Iran, Bush added: 'They do believe that Iran has got nuclear ambitions, as do we, as do many around the world.'

'This is a very serious matter. The world knows it's a serious matter and we're working together to solve this matter.'

Under a pact reached by the European countries and Iran last week, Iran is due to suspend all uranium enrichment, while it negotiates a deal in which it would receive trade incentives and peaceful nuclear technology.

Yesterday, the Foreign Office tried to play down fears that Iran is already breaching the deal which was negotiated with the EU, insisting that the IAEA be allowed to issue its own verdict on Tehran's compliance this week.

'We will wait and see what the report is: the Iranians have got until 25 November,' said a spokesman.

But Whitehall sources said the UK accepted that Iran had a complex and extensive nuclear programme that could not be shut down overnight.

'There is a lot of speculation that is unfounded. Obviously there have been a lot of concerns in the past, but there's a deal on the table and we hope that they will stick with it,' said one.

Last week, US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who has just announced his resignation, told reporters that US intelligence had seen hard evidence that Iran was close to putting a nuclear weapon on a long-range weapons system.

The allegation was immediately challenged by officials in the State Department, who said the information, which had come from a single 'walk-in' source, had yet to be verified.

Reuters

Iran Vows to Freeze Uranium Enrichment on Monday

By Amir Paivar – 21 November 2004

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran promised to meet Monday's deadline for suspending a uranium enrichment process that could be used for making nuclear weapons -- a freeze that could spare it U.N. Security Council sanctions.

"We will start suspension of uranium enrichment activities from tomorrow on, as we promised," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told a weekly news conference on Sunday.

Iranian officials have shrugged off concern -- voiced again by President Bush on Saturday -- over reports of Tehran accelerating uranium enrichment before the deadline.

"We're concerned about reports that show that prior to a certain international meeting, they're willing to speed up processing of materials that could lead to a nuclear weapon," Bush told reporters in Chile on Saturday.

On Nov. 14 Iran promised the European Union's "big three" -- France, Germany and Britain -- that it would freeze enrichment by Nov. 22 to try to ease concern that it was pursuing nuclear weapons and escape a referral to the Security Council by the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

The 35-member board of the watchdog group -- the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) -- meets on Thursday.

Asefi emphasized the suspension was temporary and voluntary. Oil-rich Iran insists its plans are limited to the peaceful generation of electricity.

Asefi and Iran's nuclear chief Hassan Rohani also rejected outgoing Secretary of State Colin Powell's assertions that Tehran had been working on ways to deliver an atomic warhead on a missile.

"I believe Powell has understood his remarks were false," Rohani told state television on Sunday. "Such claims are totally baseless."

Powell told reporters on a flight to the Middle East that he was holding to his assertions.

"I stick with it," he said.

Tehran has been developing a medium-range ballistic missile experts say would be able to hit arch-foe Israel.

Asefi shrugged off accusations by a group of Iranian exiles that Tehran was running secret centrifuge and laser uranium enrichment facilities for atomic weapons.

"We have peaceful nuclear activities ... There are no secret activities," he said.

Powell, who will attend an international conference on Iraq in Egypt on Monday, had left open the possibility of a rare one-on-one meeting with his Iranian counterpart Kamal Kharrazi.

But his latest accusation appeared to have prompted Iranian officials to shut the door on such a possibility.

Powell also played down the chance of such a meeting.

"I am not aware of any door that was there or even open," Powell said.

AFP

Europe, Washington play 'good cop, bad cop' with Iran

21 November 2004

WASHINGTON (AFP) - The United States has hardened its tone against Iran for its alleged efforts to obtain nuclear weapons, adopting a "bad cop" role against Europe's "good cop" line toward Tehran.

President George W. Bush, who was in Chile for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, sharply warned Iran Saturday about reports that the Islamic republic has accelerated production of uranium material that could be used to make nuclear weapons. "It's very important for the Iranian government to hear that we are concerned about their desires, and we're concerned about reports that show that ... they're willing to speed up processing of materials that could lead to a nuclear weapon," Bush said.

On November 9, one week after his re-election to a second four-year term, Bush extended by one year financial sanctions imposed against Iran since 1979.

And Secretary of State Colin Powell stepped up Washington's accusations against Iran by saying this week he had seen information suggesting that Tehran is seeking to adapt its missiles to carry nuclear warheads.

His statement, however, was countered by two US officials who told The Washington Post that Powell's information was based on an "unvetted, single source."

Iran agreed a week ago in a deal with Britain, France and Germany to suspend as of Monday all its uranium enrichment activities as a confidence-building measure in order to avoid possible UN sanctions over US charges that it has a covert nuclear weapons program.

"I think my view would be that the incentives of the Europeans only work against the backdrop of the United States being strong and firm on this issue," Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told Al-Jazeera television, according to a State Department transcript of the interview.

"In the vernacular, it's kind of a 'good cop, bad cop' arrangement," Armitage told the Qatar-based satellite network.

"If it works, we'll all have been successful. If it fails, we'll all fail."

Washington wants to address its concerns diplomatically rather than by military force, said Armitage, who like Powell are leaving Bush's cabinet.

"We always say no options are off the table. But war is obviously not an option that we want to consider if we can help it," he said. "We're not talking that way. We're talking about resolving this problem by diplomatic means."

The New York Times noted on Sunday that Bush has not given Iran a deadline on its alleged weapons program as he had done with Iraq before toppling Saddam Hussein's regime last year.

Plus, US troops are too busy in Iraq, making it "harder to be hawkish in this White House," the Times said in an analysis.

"We have rather more on our plate than we can handle with a nation of 25 million in Iraq," US conservative commentator George Will said on ABC television. "There are 69 million Iranians. That's a serious country."

The Los Angeles Times on Sunday called Powell's remarks an unfortunate "outburst."

"The United States, along with the rest of the UN Security Council, may yet have to back up the European diplomatic efforts. But Powell's outburst last week seemed suspiciously close to an effort to preemptively sabotage them," the daily wrote.

Meanwhile, prominent Republican Senator John McCain told NBC television: "I don't believe we are, quote, 'close' (to war with Iran) but we certainly should be very concerned, disturbed and even alarmed."

Financial Times

Iran seeks to keep some uranium tests

by Stephen Fidler – 25 November 2004

Iran has been seeking to exclude some uranium enrichment experiments from a nuclear freeze it agreed with three European governments this month, western diplomats said yesterday.

The Iranian efforts were depicted as part of the inevitable haggling ahead of a board meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency that starts in Vienna today. But they said this and other differences over a board resolution on Iran could still derail the suspension and agreement could not be taken for granted.

The resolution would formalise this month's diplomatic agreement between Iran and Britain, France and Germany. The agreement calls for a "sustained" suspension of nuclear activities while IAEA inspectors determine the purposes of Iran's nuclear activities.