

ARMS CONTROL

ASEAN Regional Forum Mulls New Terrorism Defense Activities

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Regional Forum is considering new initiatives aimed at helping member states work together to combat terrorism and other criminal activities, Kyodo News reported.

The group's members would organise tabletop drills and workshops and share technical expertise under the *ARF Work Plan for Counterterrorism and Transnational Crime*, a strategy paper that envoys at the ASEAN Regional Forum are expected to endorse it.

The organisation might eventually focus on countering chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. "The future work of the (ARF on counterterrorism) must be practical, action-oriented and concrete," the paper states. "While there are other important aspects of international counterterrorism cooperation, ARF should focus its own work on the areas where it could bring the most added value given its geographic focus, participation or past work," it adds.

The strategy calls on countries to step up their biological terrorism preparedness efforts and to better secure materials, equipment and knowledge that could support the development of biological weapons.

"The dual-use ... nature of biological science, for both peaceful and non-peaceful purposes must be addressed to both prevent bioterrorism and continue biological science development for peaceful purposes," the document states. "This will also build safe, secure and sustainable capacity to combat infectious diseases, thereby meshing international security and public health priorities."

The forum includes the 10 ASEAN member nations — Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos,

Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam — as well as Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, China, East Timor, the European Union, India, Japan, Mongolia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Sri Lanka, North Korea, South Korea and the United States.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090722_5334.php

Chemical Weapons in Baltic Sea Remain a Threat, Lithuania Says

Lithuania called for continued attention to the danger posed by chemical weapons dumped decades ago in the Baltic Sea, the Baltic News Service reported.

"We would like to highlight that chemical weapons dumped at sea pose a threat to the entire international community," acting Lithuanian Foreign Minister Vygaudas Usackas said in a statement. "Therefore, this issue has to be permanently raised in international organisations and frameworks."

The Baltic Sea was used as a repository for tens of thousands of tons of chemical weapons confiscated from Germany after World War II, according to a 1995 report from a working group of the Helsinki Commission.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090721_9461.php

DISARMAMENT

Russia's Maradykovsky Facility Destroys First Ton of Sarin

Russia's Maradykovsky facility has destroyed one ton of sarin gas, the first of 231 tons of the deadly nerve agent that the site plans to eliminate by the end of the year, ITAR-Tass reported.

The effort to dispose of the substance at the

Maradykovsky facility — which has stored more than 40,000 sarin bombs and missile warheads for half a century — is being overseen by several groups, including the United Nations. The effort is part of Moscow's 2006 pledge to destroy its stockpiled chemical weapons by 2012.

The Maradykovsky plant is the third Russian facility to begin the chemical weapons disposal process.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090730_9302.php

Continued Commitment Needed on U.S. Chemical Disarmament, OPCW Chief Says

A leading international nonproliferation official is urging the United States not to retreat from providing sufficient funds to accelerate the complete elimination of the U.S. stockpile of chemical weapons.

"We hope that ... every [funding commitment] will be completed in good time for the facilities to be completed in good time and be able to destroy the remaining chemical weapons in good time," said Rogelio Pfirter, director general of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Defense Department's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program stands to receive about \$550 million in fiscal 2010 as it continues construction of demilitarization plants at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky and the Pueblo Chemical Depot in Colorado. That would be a nearly 30 percent hike in resources from this year, and news reports indicate that the organisation could collect \$1.2 billion in extra funding over several upcoming budgets.

The Pentagon has destroyed more than 60 percent of its chemical arsenal, which was stored for decades at nine locations. The Colorado and Kentucky sites will be the last two installations to begin — and presumably complete — destruction of their stockpiles. As it stands, the end is more than a decade away.

Proposed ACWA funding in the next budget is "substantially sufficient for a one-year effort," Pfirter said in a June telephone interview with *Global Security Newswire*. There should be no letdown in spending, he said: "It will take much more than that just to complete the facilities."

Pfirter was in Washington last month for his first meetings with Obama administration officials at the White House and the State and Defense departments, along with lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

During the subsequent interview, he avoided discussing details of the visit. However, the former Argentine diplomat said he left convinced that the new U.S. leadership is engaged on meeting its commitments under the international Chemical Weapons Convention.

The United States is one of 188 member nations to the 1997 pact that prohibits the development, production, stockpiling, use or proliferation of chemical warfare materials such as mustard blister agent and the lethal nerve agents VX and sarin.

Any nation that joins the pact while in possession of banned armaments — the list to date encompasses Albania, India, Iraq, Libya, Russia, the United States and a publicly unidentified nation widely understood to be South Korea — is required to destroy those weapons and any production capabilities.

"The administration fully recognizes the convention and is totally aware. It doesn't need anyone else to remind them," Pfirter said. "The commitment is very, very strong toward the convention. I'm sure the United States will continue to look for ways of bringing their own destruction program in line with the convention."

Officials in Washington also said little about Pfirter's day and a half of talks. One congressional source said Pfirter met for a short time with then-Representative Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.), who has since become undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. The two discussed the challenges facing the U.S. disarmament program, the source said.

“There was no big strategy discussion. I think it was a courtesy call on his part,” according to the Capitol Hill official.

The administration’s public face on arms control has to date been squarely aimed at nuclear weapons, with President Barack Obama in April giving a highly publicized speech in Prague on disarmament. More recently, the U.S. president signed a pledge with his Russian counterpart to draw down their nations’ strategic nuclear arsenals.

“The State Department and Defense Department have taken President Obama’s Prague speech as their marching orders. So they view the president’s top arms control priorities as entirely nuclear, with much less of a focus on the other categories of WMD,” said chemical-weapon expert Jonathan Tucker, a senior fellow at the Washington office of the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies.

Concerns in the intelligence community regarding the threat of terrorists developing and using chemical weapons have not resulted in new international policy initiatives, Tucker said. The White House has also not scheduled any sort of meeting on chemical-weapon issues similar to a planned August session on biological threats, he added.

Meanwhile, the State Department has yet to appoint a high-level diplomat to replace the Bush administration’s envoy to Pfirter’s organisation, which monitors compliance with the convention, Tucker said. That position will be crucial for preparing Washington to deal with the diplomatic fallout expected when it inevitably misses the chemical-weapon disarmament deadline set by the document.

A Pressing Schedule

The convention originally set a deadline of April 29, 2007, one decade after its entry into force, for its member nations to do away with their chemical stockpiles. In 2006, all declared arsenal holders but Albania received schedule extensions, with the United States and Russia being given a full five extra years.

In the intervening years, Albania, India and South Korea have all completed their chemical demilitarization work. The Defense Department, though, has acknowledged its inability to eliminate its weapons on time.

“The DOD review has concluded that there are no realistic options available to destroy the complete U.S. stockpile by the CWC deadline of April 2012,” the Pentagon said last May in a report to Congress.

The latest plan calls for the Army Chemical Materials Agency around that time to complete destruction operations at storage sites that held 90 percent of the U.S. chemical warfare holdings. The organisation by June 30 had eliminated more than 63 percent of the original U.S. arsenal of 31,500 tons of warfare materials. The remaining 10 percent would be eliminated by 2021 by the Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives program, according to the report.

Washington now has less than three years to persuade other CWC member states that delays in the destruction of its chemical stockpile are the result of factors beyond its control and that it is doing everything it can to meet its treaty obligations. Failure to do so could result in international criticism or more concrete penalties.

The best outcome for the administration would be that, rather than blaming or punishing the United States, the organisation’s members simply require the Pentagon to eliminate whatever remains of its stockpile within a specified period of time, Tucker said. If U.S. officials fail to prepare the ground diplomatically, however, they should expect to face a blast of rhetoric when the deadline passes, he added.

Also possible, though less likely, is that OPCW member nations collectively or individually could impose sanctions against the United States, such as stripping it of its voting rights within the organisation or cutting off trade in dual-use industrial chemicals listed in the pact.

“It’s hard to predict what the political dynamic in the OPCW will be in April 2012. Obviously

it's essential for the United States to begin preparing now to make a convincing case," Tucker said. "The total quantity of CW agent that still remains to be destroyed ... will also be significant."

"Already countries like Iran have been highly critical of the United States and I anticipate that that criticism will only increase, so it's important that other CWC member states be seen as sympathetic to the U.S. position. That will take a fair amount of persuasion, I think," he added.

U.S. diplomats are likely to argue that the treaty drafters set unrealistic deadlines that failed to account for the technical and political challenges involved in destroying chemical-weapon stockpiles in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, Tucker said. The United States could also point to recent increases in Pentagon funding as an illustration of its commitment to the spirit — if not the letter — of the treaty, he said.

Should diplomatic efforts prove persuasive, the United States might receive a pass similar to the one granted Albania, Tucker said. The Adriatic nation had to overcome technical difficulties in destruction of its 16.7-metric-ton arsenal of warfare materials but finished operations several months after the treaty-set deadline without sustaining any repercussions, he said.

In deciding against penalizing Albania, the OPCW Executive Council invoked a paragraph in Article 8 of the convention, which states: "In its consideration of doubts or concerns regarding compliance and causes of noncompliance ... the Executive Council shall consult with the states parties involved and, as appropriate, request the state party to take measures to redress the situation within a specified time."

Officials at the State Department told GSN they could not discuss a situation that is several years from being realized.

"Of course people are aware of the present [schedule] estimates," Pfirter said. It is a political and diplomatic issue that will be "attended to," he said.

The Deadline at Home

Beyond the convention deadline is the December 31, 2017, end-date demanded by Congress for complete elimination of the U.S. stockpile. That is also almost certain to be missed; as recently as last September, the military estimated that disposal operations at Blue Grass and Pueblo would have barely begun by then, much less finished.

The two installations have been beset by a variety of problems over the years. Federal legislation forced the Defense Department to find alternatives to destruction of weapons using incineration, the process used at most other sites. Military planners ultimately chose to employ chemical neutralization, but progress on the plants themselves has been slowed by major funding fluctuations — as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq drew away money — and a mandate for redesigns to restrict costs.

The projects, though, have been on an upswing in recent years. The ACWA program received \$427 million in this budget year, and lawmakers have already added \$5 million to the Pentagon's \$545 million request for fiscal 2010 as it makes its way through Congress. The next fiscal year begins October 1, 2009.

Construction of the primary demilitarization facilities is now under way at both sites, with crucial equipment being installed at Pueblo, according to a June update from the program. The United States can use the extra money to draw closer to the congressional deadline, but it will not meet it.

"To achieve the congressional destruction mandate of 2017, only transporting portions of the stockpile to currently operating destruction facilities showed any reasonable probability of success, and this option is precluded by law," according to the Pentagon report.

The document recommends an expedited disposal program in which the program receives additional resources through several budgets — annual funding that one expert said would be roughly equivalent to the amount requested this year, which would constitute a \$250 million

yearly increase over previous estimates — and all warfare agents, munitions and waste are treated on-site at the Colorado and Kentucky installations. Carrying out the effort would involve increasing personnel to allow for faster construction, an early beginning to testing of the plants and expanding disposal operations from four to seven days a week, 24 hours per day.

Neutralization of more than 2,600 tons of mustard agent in Colorado would begin in May 2014 and end in September 2017 — three years ahead of existing schedule estimates. The Kentucky plant would begin operations in October 2018 and finish elimination of 523 tons of mustard, VX and sarin in May 2021 — two years earlier than anticipated. Speeding the pace of work would actually save about \$235 million, bringing lifetime costs for the ACWA program to \$8.2 billion, the Defense Department found.

Spending on the entire chemical demilitarization effort would exceed \$35 billion, according to the DOD estimate. The strategy outlined in the document appears to reflect the administration's plan for the program.

“The current path forward is to use the fiscal resources in the FY 2010 president's budget request to accelerate the ACWA program to achieve destruction of the Colorado stockpile by 2017 and the Kentucky stockpile by 2021,” a Pentagon spokesman stated by e-mail.

Assuming the funding comes through, the Defense Department is likely to meet its present goal of finishing off its prohibited arsenal 12 years from now, said Paul Walker, security and sustainability director for the environmental organisation Global Green USA.

“It's a little too late to play complete catch-up. But the catch-up they're playing is a good sign,” he said.

Walker argued, though, that the schedule could be cut by another one or two years through certain measures, such as use of explosive detonation chambers to destroy mustard-filled munitions at Blue Grass before the demilitarization plant itself is operating.

Pfirtter, who has a year left in his eight-year stint as OPCW chief, acknowledged the challenges ahead. However, he also asserted that even the most recent target dates are not set in stone.

The Defense Department in 2006 estimated that operations at all existing disposal plants would be less than 70 percent complete by 2012, Pfirtter noted. The latest assessment has all but two facilities wrapping up operations by then and just 10 percent of the stockpile remaining.

“We look forward to further estimates that will show further substantive progress in the pace of destruction, so as to ensure elimination is achieved,” he said.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090722_8989.php

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Swine Flu Shock – Is it a Biological Weapon?

As type A (H1N1) flu continues its relentless toll in Thailand, seemingly largely defeating preventative measures, there are disturbing reports that the flu is not one type but, in fact, already a cocktail of human, avian and swine viruses. Which means most antidotes will be ineffective, especially if it turns out to be an ‘escaped biological weapon’; one of the latest claims!

Ever since the type A (H1N1) flu virus came to Thailand, there have been confused and often misleading statements in the media and from the government regarding the true statistics about the number of people infected in Thailand. Initially, great store was put in the thermal sensors installed at the airports being able to effectively prevent the virus entering via this portal, that is until the Minister of Health expressed his concern about travelers dodging the checks! The sensors have obviously been ineffective.

Wikipedia ([http:// en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_swine_flu_outbreak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2009_swine_flu_outbreak)) is normally an informative source, as they are supposedly furnished with the latest updates by the Health Ministry, but although the statistics on deaths is more accurate than MCOT, one of the government media outlets, the number of infections on both sources is woefully out of date, if reports by Pongphon Sarnsamak in 'The Nation', published on July 23, are anything to go by "Dr Kamnuan Ungchusak, spokesperson for the Disease Control Department, said the ministry estimated the "real" number of people who had caught the typeA (H1N1) flu strain in the three months since the outbreak hit the country in early May was about 440,000. This was based on a ratio of about 10 deaths per 100,000 people infected with the new virus. "

In the same article, it stated "Disease Control Department spokesperson Dr Suppamit Chunsutiwat estimated that between 6 to 30 million people would get the new flu virus with about 600 to 1,200 people likely to die because most people do not have immunity." This contrasts with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva statement that his administration would not allow the number of fatalities "to exceed 1,000."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has estimated that up to 2 billion people could be infected worldwide if the current outbreak worsens; this especially if the strain mutates. Thai medical officials, Chulalongkorn University virologist Dr Yong Pooworawan for one, are at pains to point out that currently there has been no mutation in Thailand. One is forced to add – AS YET! It can only be a matter of time.

A recent WHO report maintained the H1N1 flu virus definitely has the potential to unpredictably mutate into a more virulent form, resulting in a pandemic that may circle the globe in at least two or even three waves. In June, it was reported that a new H1N1 virus mutation, a subtype strain named A/Sao Paulo/1454/H1N1, has already been isolated in a 26-year-old patient in Brazil.

The WHO chief Keiji Fukuda at a press conference in May suggested "Perhaps a third of the world's population could be infected

with this virus, based on previous pandemic." A statement reinforced by The Imperial College London, which maintained that swine flu has a 'full pandemic potential' as it may infect one-third of the world's population, currently standing at 6.774 billion (US), within the next six to nine months, adding that the new virus can infect one out of every three individuals who come into contact with an H1N1 patient. The virus also seems to target the young and healthy; a disturbing parallel with the 1919 Spanish flu.

By far the most worrying speculations, however, concern reports that suggest the A-H1N1 virus, may be a biological weapon, which escaped or may have been stolen from a U.S. Army Medical Command test lab, although the WHO and the U.S. government have been quick to deny such claims.

Speculation has been sparked because the H1N1 flu virus is described as a completely new strain, an intercontinental mixture of human, avian and swine viruses, from America, Europe and Asia, never previously seen. According to a source known to former NSA official Wayne Madsen, "A top scientist for the United Nations, who has examined the outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in Africa, as well as HIV/AIDS victims, concluded that H1N1 possesses certain transmission "vectors" that suggest that the new flu strain has been genetically-manufactured as a military biological warfare weapon.

Madsen claims that his source, and another in Indonesia, "Are convinced that the current outbreak of a new strain of swine flu in Mexico and some parts of the United States is the result of the introduction of a human-engineered pathogen that could result in a widespread global pandemic, equivalent to the 1919 Spanish flu epidemic.

"Chad Jones, spokesman for Fort Meade, said CID is investigating the possibility of missing virus samples from the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases, the Army's top bio-lab," accordingly to The Frederick News. The USAMRIID also studies various pathogens, including ebola, anthrax and plague.

It wouldn't be the first time that a government laboratory has been the source of disease outbreaks: in the UK, the 2007 outbreak of foot and mouth disease was traced to a government lab, and there was a significant outbreak of a new form of swine flu in the U.S. which originated from the army base at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

<http://www.pattayadailynews.com/shownews.php?IDNEWS=0000009894>

Global Insights: Worse Than Swine Flu?

Thanks to the assets and strategy developed during the past decade, the United States has thus far effectively managed the swine flu (H1N1) threat. The resources, plans, and authority now at the federal government's disposal have enabled it to respond to a major health crisis that caused more serious problems in other countries. The Bush administration left a robust toolkit for the Obama team, which for its part has used it well. Cooperation among federal, state, local, private, and other important actors has been effective in distributing public face masks, implementing mass inoculation campaigns, and taking other timely responses.

At present, the government and the nation's scientists are in a race to see whether they can mass-produce and distribute a safe and effective vaccine for the H1N1 influenza virus before the flu season starts in the northern hemisphere this fall. And we have a good chance of winning.

The effective response to H1N1 influenza suggests that the United States also has strong assets for dealing with a domestic bioterrorism incident. Unfortunately, under certain conditions, the deliberate use of a dangerous biological agent as a weapon could represent a much more severe threat than swine flu, which in itself is not as serious an influenza threat as several previous disease outbreaks. In particular, H1N1 has a lower lethality rate than other biological agents.

The current epidemic has exposed weaknesses that, if left unattended, could present major problems when dealing with more dangerous

public health challenges. We must exploit the unwelcome opportunity presented by the current H1N1 experience to reassess existing strategies and capabilities for countering the full range of biological threats.

One of the unique challenges of biological warfare is recognizing early — before the dangerous agent can kill and spread — that an attack has indeed occurred. Biological agents are often odourless, tasteless, and invisible. The symptoms produced by biological weapons are frequently confused with those caused by naturally occurring diseases.

Yet, the present network of BioWatch Generation 2 sensors deployed in most major American cities, though an improvement over the surveillance systems operating before September 2001, relies on obsolete technology and practices. They monitor only a limited number of pathogens at some 30 large urban areas by collecting airborne particles onto solid filters. Every day, someone must retrieve these filters and transport them to state and local public health laboratories for analysis.

Experts fear that this lengthy and cumbersome process would not provide sufficient early warning of a biological threat for timely medical and other countermeasures. They advocate an upgraded nationwide surveillance system that detects a wider range of potential biological threats, requires less labour-intensive intervention on a routine basis, has lower operating costs (such as through enhanced automation), and continuously communicates data through secure wireless networks to round-the-clock watch centers.

The United States also needs to upgrade communications, surveillance, and public health networks as well as the laboratories involved in managing a domestic biological emergency. Another problem is the growing shortage of private health care workers such as nurses, physicians, pharmacists, laboratory technicians, and respiratory therapists. In addition to beds, hospitals lack the surge capacity to meet the demands of a major bioterror attack, given these shortages.

The large number of uninsured and underinsured Americans also represents a major public health vulnerability, since these groups often eschew seeking medical care until they are severely sick. This could potentially delay recognition of a biological threat and complicate post-infection treatments that require timely medical intervention.

Yet, funding for health-preparedness programs has been declining since 2007, and the recent U.S. recession has accelerated this trend. The current fiscal crisis has resulted in sharp reductions in federal, state, and local spending on preparing for bioterrorism and other major public health threats.

Given the likely persistence of shortages due to these resource constraints, public health care authorities and medical providers need to improve planning to alter their operational procedures during a major emergency, including by adjusting standards of care, providing assistance at alternative sites, and managing workforce surge issues.

Funding is also an issue with respect to vaccines. The immediate focus of public health efforts is to develop a safe and effective vaccine for the swine flu. The Obama administration recently announced it would allocate \$1.8 billion to develop the vaccine ingredients, plan immunization campaigns, and assist the Food and Drug Administration to review the proposed vaccine before using it on the general public. But after overcoming the current emergency, it is imperative that we return to the original U.S. goal of having the manufacturing capacity by 2011 to produce, within six months of the identification of a pandemic, sufficient vaccine to protect every American against a virus.

Finally, the question arises how best to conduct the mass-inoculation campaign required to administer these vaccines in an emergency. The current system works tolerably well in the case of seasonal influenza, when vulnerable Americans receive shots at their doctors or clinics. But it is inadequate for responding to a more serious or faster-spreading biological pathogen. The United States has never developed or rehearsed a rapid, mass-inoculation system. It will require intimate

cooperation among diverse public and private sector actors, who will need to collect, administer, and monitor the widespread use of the vaccine.

A superior public-private partnership is also needed to conduct robust biomedical research and development. Not only are improved vaccines and equipment required to better address existing biological threats, but additional instruments are needed to address new threats — whether from the mutation of existing natural diseases or from the deliberate creation of new biowarfare agents.

At present, it typically takes over a decade and almost \$1 billion to develop a single pharmaceutical product. The Food and Drug Administration only approves one out of every five drugs that enter clinical trials. Measures are needed to decrease these costs and delays.

The government and the pharmaceutical industry need more mutually supportive policies. The United States currently lacks the capacity to manufacture sufficient vaccine for Americans' domestic requirements, let alone to support foreign nations in need. Conversely, relying on foreign vaccine producers is an unwise geopolitical strategy and leaves the United States vulnerable should foreign governments understandably decide to prioritize the inoculation of their own citizens.

The advances of the past decade have left the United States well-prepared for the current challenge of the swine flu pandemic. But more needs to be done to plan and prepare for the potential demands that a biological attack or naturally occurring pathogen might place on the nation's rapid-response medical capabilities.

<http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=4132>

UN chief urges Iraq and Kuwait to find alternative to Iraqi payment of \$24 billion debt

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged Iraq and Kuwait to discuss alternatives to payment of the \$24 billion debt Baghdad owes Kuwait as a

result of Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of its tiny neighbour.

In a report to the U.N. Security Council reviewing all Iraq-related resolutions adopted after the Kuwait invasion, Ban suggested the possibility of converting the outstanding payments into investments that would meet Iraq's reconstruction needs "and be beneficial to the region as a whole."

He noted that this possibility was discussed during the recent visit to Kuwait by the speaker of Iraq's Parliament, and he encouraged discussions on alternative solutions to continue.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki urged the Security Council's most powerful members to cancel all sanctions and more than 70 resolutions adopted after the Kuwait invasion, saying Iraq is now a democracy that poses no threat to international peace and security.

The council decided on December 22 to review all post-invasion resolutions and asked the secretary-general to consult the Iraqi government and report his findings so the council can take action allowing "Iraq to achieve the status it enjoyed prior to the adoption of such resolutions."

In his 19-page report, Ban said that nearly two decades after the invasion the situation "is yet to normalize fully," though both countries have been making progress toward resolving some issues.

Ban stressed that "a high degree of political will on both sides is still required to achieve this."

Iraq currently pays 5 per cent of the proceeds of all oil and gas sales into a U.N. Compensation Fund, but al-Maliki, citing the ongoing financial crisis, has been pressing to lower the payment to 1 per cent or eliminate payments altogether.

Ban said the \$24 billion owed to Kuwait is mainly related to oil sector losses following the invasion, including the cost of extinguishing oil well fires and damage to government buildings and ministries. In addition, Kuwait seeks some \$1.2 billion to settle an environmental claim.

Noting Iraq's obligation to contribute to the Compensation Fund and its request to lower or eliminate payments, the secretary-general said: "I strongly encourage Iraq and other stakeholders to actively discuss alternative solutions to the issue of outstanding compensation and debt payments, including through investments, in the mutual interest of Iraq's people and the region as a whole."

On other Iraq-Kuwait issues, Ban urged steps that would pave the way for the two countries to take over maintenance of their border. And while Iraqi efforts have resulted in the identification of the remains of 236 missing Kuwaitis and the return of some Kuwaiti property, the secretary-general noted that Kuwait's archives have still not been found and 369 Kuwaitis remain unaccounted for.

In May 2003, the council lifted economic sanctions against Iraq, opening the country to international trade and investment and allowing oil exports to resume. In June 2004, it lifted an embargo on the sale of conventional weapons to the government.

But there are still limits on some activities related to the possible production of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometres (90 miles) are still banned.

[http://www.google.com/
hostednews/canadianpress/article/
ALeqM5gIXANjce13vsPCB6IsWRhL-dE4cg](http://www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article/ALeqM5gIXANjce13vsPCB6IsWRhL-dE4cg)

Study Questions Anthrax Vaccine Dispersal Plan

Floods of patients could quickly overwhelm U.S. hospitals after an anthrax attack if a government effort to distribute vaccines experienced delays, researchers concluded in an independent study published in July.

The Cities Readiness Initiative, a program of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, calls for emergency responders to distribute vaccinations involved in a biological terror attack within 48 hours of initial exposure.

If terrorists released anthrax in aerosol form over a major city, a mass vaccination campaign in line with federal standards would protect up to 87 percent of the exposed population from illness, provided that the effort got under way within 48 hours, said the study's authors, who developed an computer simulation of an anthrax strike's aftermath.

With each additional 24 hours, the number of untreated exposed people requiring hospitalization would rise by 2.4 to 2.9 percent, according to the researchers. Delays of more than two days in starting treatment would prompt up to 6.5 percent additional hospitalizations per day.

"Delays in detecting and initiating response to large-scale, covert aerosol anthrax releases in a major city would render even highly effective CRI-compliant mass prophylaxis campaigns unable to prevent unsustainable levels of surge hospitalizations," the report concludes. "Although outcomes may improve with more rapid epidemiological identification of affected subpopulations and increased collaboration across regional public health and hospital systems, these findings support an increased focus on prevention of this public health threat."

Computer modeling could help hospitals determine how to use their workers, equipment and other resources most efficiently, possibly enabling a clinic to vaccinate 15,000 patients in 17 hours, the researchers found.

"How hospitals and public health agencies are prepared for an attack — and how they respond to the surge in patients seeking care — will determine our success in containing an attack if one happens," said Mark Helfand, editor of *Medical Decision Making*, the journal that published the report.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090729_3437.php

Pentagon drill helps local agencies prepare for possible attack

Arlington, Virginia- Emergency crews from across the area, military helicopters, and nearly

100 volunteers were part of a drill testing the response to a possible biological attack.

The drill kicked off with a slow moving pickup truck spraying a harmless powder in the South Parking Lot of the Pentagon.

Volunteers walked around the parking lot as the spray powder misted through the sky.

Many volunteers who were involved in the 2007 drill tell WTOP that drill went smoother than two years ago. Some volunteers say that the emergency response personnel were clear on their responsibilities and that made a big difference.

Local officials tested whether decontamination on volunteers could be achieved by using a high pressure spray from a fire truck hose or if a scrubbing was necessary. Officials say the answers will come in the weeks ahead and that's what they need since there is not enough research on what to do in case an attack occurs.

Bonnie Regan, Deputy Director of Emergency Management in Arlington County, says learning which process works better is key to developing a good response plan to a biological attack.

"We are looking at what is effective," she says. "What would be really great is that we find that and we can clean people effectively with the least number of resources."

Another key part of the drill focused on the use of helicopters during a possible biological attack.

The drill included the landing of a helicopter in the parking lot with the harmless powder on the ground and then a second landing with the ground washed over. One Pentagon Force Protection Agency official wanted to know if landing a helicopter would cause particles from a biological weapon could be carried through the air.

The drill lasted three hours. The Pentagon Force Protection Agency expects to release a final report later this month.

<http://www.wtop.com/?nid=25&sid=1715782>

U. S. Opens Way to Ease Sanctions Against Syria

The Obama administration said that it would take new steps to ease American sanctions against Syria on a case-by-case basis, the latest sign of a diplomatic thaw.

Administration officials said the message was conveyed to President Bashar al-Assad of Syria in Damascus by President Obama's Middle East envoy, George J. Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell said the American government would try to expedite the process for obtaining individual exemptions to the sanctions, which prohibit the export of all American products to Syria except food and medicine.

The move will particularly affect "requests to export products related to information technology and telecommunication equipment and parts and components related to the safety of civil aviation," said a State Department spokesman, Andrew J. Laine.

While the shift does not change the letter of the law of the sanctions, which were passed by Congress in 2003 and cannot be modified without Congressional consent, administration officials said it was significant because it indicated a change in how the White House would view requests by companies for waivers to sell their wares to Syria.

It is also another notable instance of the Obama administration opening the door to Syria on what it calls a basis of mutual interest and respect — and as part of a broader strategy of trying to get the country to turn away from its alliances with Iran and Islamic militant groups. In June, the administration said it would send an ambassador to Syria for the first time since 2005.

Under the Syria Accountability Act, as the sanctions are known, the president can work through the Commerce Department to grant exemptions for national security reasons in one of six categories, including one that allows for the sale of airplane parts to ensure safe civil aviation. Under the Bush administration,

however, a limited number of such exemptions were granted.

"We are going to look at these waivers, especially on airplane spare parts, and our predisposition is going to be, view them favorably, as opposed to the prior administration's policy," said a senior administration official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter.

The decision to move toward eased sanctions was first reported in The Wall Street Journal.

The sanctions have powerful backers in Congress, and the initial reaction against any effort to ease them was swift.

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, the ranking Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said she was "deeply troubled that the United States would make unilateral concessions to the Syrian regime and ease pressure on Damascus, even as the State Department recently reported to Congress that Syria continues to pursue advanced missile and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capabilities and to sponsor violent Islamist extremist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas."

Representative Eliot L. Engel, a Democrat from New York, who helped write the sanctions bill, said that while granting such exemptions was "perfectly legal" under the act, he would urge caution. "Syria, from what I can see, has not changed its spots," he said.

Mr. Mitchell's visit to Syria for talks with Mr. Assad was his second trip there in two months. Administration officials said that Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Assad also tentatively agreed that a future delegation from the United States Central Command and Iraq would travel to Damascus, Syria's capital, and discuss greater cooperation in securing the Syria-Iraq border against insurgent traffic, a high priority of the Obama administration.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/29/world/middleeast/29syria.html>

NATO Wants Training Ground With Toxins And Viruses

Croatian Defence Ministry has turned down NATO's proposal on constructing a training ground centre against terrorist attacks with biological, chemical and nuclear weapons, the Jutarnji list daily writes.

If the proposal had not been rejected, this would have been the biggest training ground in Europe with large amounts of chemicals and viruses. Its construction would cost 15 million kuna.

The main reason why Americans want a training ground for war gases in Dalmatia is because it has a long period with nice weather, which enables nearly 8 months of active training.

However, the ministry's opinion about the centre is negative. The ministry has turned down the construction of the centre, however, it does not oppose that this or some other company purchases or uses the abandoned warehouse.

Douglas Eaton, Knotox director, believes that the Croatian Defence Ministry needs such a centre. Despite the fact that most poisonous biological and chemical weapons would be used in the centre, Knotox claims that the chemicals which would be used in drills would not be in contact with the environment or harm the local population, plants and animals.

http://www.javno.com/en-croatia/nato-wants-training-ground-with-toxins-and-viruses_271866

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Scientists Develop Bat - Like Biodeceptor

U.S. scientists have developed an airborne biological weapons-detection drone that is based on a bat, complete with flapping wings, United Press International reported.

The solar-powered, self-guiding "micro-aerial vehicle" is approximately the size of a bat and borrows its anatomical elements: Developers at North Carolina State University designed its skeletal and muscular structures to imitate that of the winged mammal.

"We have used a shape-memory metal alloy that is super-elastic for the joints," said designer Stefan Seelecke in an interview with the London Daily Telegraph. "The material provides a full range of motion, but will always return to its original position — a function performed by many tiny bones, cartilage and tendons in real bats."

The drone, still a prototype, is intended for military use to detect biological warfare materials and conduct general surveillance.

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090709_2519.php

Scientists Develop System for Making Paper Biodeceptors

A team of Canadian researchers has developed a mechanism for making paper biological-weapon sensors using an ink similar to the material in printer cartridges, United Press International reported.

The ink would be made up of biocompatible silica nanoparticles engineered to change color upon contact with a specific biological agent, according to the team led by McMaster University associate professor John Brennan.

The researchers at the Ontario university said they hope to develop an inexpensive, easily transported and fast-acting means of testing for toxins and disease agents .

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20090716_8436.php

Australia starts human trials of H1N1 vaccine

Australia began its first human trials of a swine flu vaccine.

More than 700 people have died from the H1N1 virus worldwide, the World Health Organisation (WHO) claims. The WHO commissioned an independent research into the correlation between one of its vaccine programs in Africa and S.E. Asia and the subsequent outbreak of AIDS. The report found that smallpox vaccines were contaminated with combined sheep and cow viruses which could only have been done in a lab. The WHO suppressed and never released the report until now, which was then published in the Times newspaper of London science section many years ago.

The 'swine flu' (North American Influenza H1N1) trials will be conducted on some 600 adult and child volunteers at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in South Australia. They will be receiving two injections of the vaccine, three weeks apart.

Doctors will analyze the participants who have got both standard and increased dosage and look to find at what dose they develop an appropriate immune response, according to their press releases.

Melbourne-based CSL company will test the vaccine for the H1N1 virus.

"We appreciate that new influenza strains like the swine flu can surprise us with properties that mean they might require higher dosing and two injections rather than one to provoke the desired level of immune response in humans," Dr. Russell Bassett, CSL's global director of clinical development, said in a statement.

Australia is among the countries worst-hit by the H1N1 virus originated in the United States and which then passed to Mexico where it achieved notoriety.

Canada has reported H1N1 cases which are resistant to Tamiflu.

The H1N1 outbreak came after the Baxter pharmaceutical company which manufactures vaccines, was found to have vaccines contaminated with bird flu type viruses.

There is currently a legal case being brought against Baxter AG, Baxter International

and Avir Green Hill Biotechnology AG "for manufacturing, disseminating, and releasing a biological weapon of mass destruction on Austrian soil between December 2008 and February 2009 with the intention of causing a global bird flu pandemic virus and of intending to profit from that same pandemic in an act that violates laws on international organised crime and genocide."

<http://mathaba.net/news/?x=621168>

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