

Iran, U.S. trade barbs before meeting

By Karl Vick
WASHINGTON POST

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran and the United States on Sunday heralded a crucial week of decision-making at the International Atomic Energy Agency by exchanging thinly veiled threats about the consequences of a vote to send the issue of Iran's nuclear program to the U.N. Security Council.

Iran's chief negotiator renewed a threat to interrupt petroleum exports if the IAEA board of governors followed through on its vote last month to report Iran to the Security Council pending a last stab at a diplomatic solution. Iran is the second-largest producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

"If we are referred to the Security Council, problems might occur for others as well as us," Iran's top negotiator, Ali Larijani, said at a news conference. "We would not like to use our oil as a weapon. We would not like to make other countries suffer."

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, in turn warned of "painful consequences" if Iran made good on a separate threat, also repeated Sunday in Tehran, to answer a punitive vote by moving rapidly toward large-scale uranium enrichment.

Enriching uranium can produce fuel for civilian power reactors, which is all



IRANIAN WOMEN gather Sunday at the mausoleum of Ayatollah Khomeini to support Iran's leaders and the nuclear program.

VAHID SALEMI — Associated Press

Iran says its nuclear program is intended for. The same process, if taken further, can produce fuel for nuclear warheads, which the Bush administration and others assert is Iran's ultimate goal.

Bolton was speaking at the convention of a pro-Israel lobby, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

President Bush has repeatedly said the possibility of military strikes remains "on the table" even as Washington endorsed an intense international diplomatic effort.

The IAEA meeting has loomed as a showdown since Feb. 4, when the agency's governing panel voted 27 to 3 to

discipline Iran for resuming nuclear research, some two years after voluntarily suspending nuclear research amid concerns that the program was not purely civilian.

The Security Council has the power to impose economic or other sanctions on Iran, though diplomats say the council likely would choose measures that gradually increased pressure on Tehran.

The IAEA board, which convenes in Vienna, is not expected to take up Iran's file until Tuesday, and diplomats said a final vote probably would not come until late in the week.

Al-Jaafari faces more pressure to step down

At least five Sunnis killed in sectarian violence

By Steven R. Hurst
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Sunni Arab and Kurdish politicians increased pressure Sunday on Shiite Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari to abandon his bid for a new term, while leaders of Iraq's Shiite majority struggled to overcome growing internal divisions.

Despite the squabbling, there were reports the new parliament would be called into session for the first time as early as the end of the week, starting the clock on a 60-day period during which it would have to elect a president and approve a prime minister and Cabinet.

The struggle to form a broad-based governing coalition acceptable to all the country's main groups has been further hampered by the surge in sectarian conflict.

Targeted sectarian violence killed at least five people Sunday. Three men died in a gunfight at a Sunni mosque in Baghdad, and two relatives of a top Sunni cleric were slain in a drive-by shooting. Sunnis accused death squads allied to the interim government, allegations denied by the Shiite-dominated Interior Ministry.

U.N. envoy to Iraq Ashraf Jhangir Qazi expressed serious concern Sunday about human rights in the country, citing reports of excessive use of force, illegal detention centers and disappearances.

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In Brief

JERUSALEM

Israel reportedly may redraw borders

Israel will draw its own borders and withdraw from isolated West Bank settlements if acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's party wins elections next month, a political ally said Sunday, the clearest indication yet of the Israeli leader's plans for a new government.

Avi Dichter, who has become Olmert's chief spokesman on internal security issues, said Israel will move settlers from isolated areas to the main West Bank settlement blocs.

He also said the military would remain in the emptied areas, unlike last summer's pullout from the Gaza Strip, and the whole process could take four years.

"It will be only a civilian disengagement, not a military disengagement," Dichter said, adding the unilateral moves would be necessary after the rise of the militant Islamic group Hamas to power in the Palestinian parliament.

Israel, backed by the United States and the European Union, has said it will have no ties with a Hamas-led government unless the group, which is sworn to the destruction of the Jewish state, renounces violence, recognizes Israel and accepts past peace agreements.

MIRAN SHAH, PAKISTAN

Pakistanis flee after tribal attack

Hundreds of people lugging bags and bundles of clothes fled a remote town after pro-Taliban tribesmen and foreign militants battled security forces in northwestern Pakistan, leaving at least 53 people dead in the worst clashes in the lawless region in two years.

BEIJING

The unrest came amid mounting anger because of military attacks against al-Qaida and Taliban remnants, who have been sheltered by heavily armed tribes that have long resisted the government's control.

Fighting started Saturday and died down early Sunday in the North Waziristan region, an army spokesman said.

BEIJING

Chinese promise more to countryside

China's premier committed billions of dollars to improve conditions in the restive countryside while saying Sunday that economic growth would slow to 8 percent — a significant drop from last year and much lower than international projections.

In a key address to the annual session of the country's figurehead parliament, Wen Jiabao also vowed to resume dialogue with Taiwan, split from the mainland since 1949. But he warned the island's democratically elected leaders against pursuing formal independence — a step that Beijing has warned could lead to war.

Concerning the nation's budget, Wen said new spending on schools, farm aid, health care and infrastructure would produce a "rapid and significant change in the overall appearance of the countryside."

CAIRO, EGYPT

Beijing will budget an extra \$5.2 billion to raise spending on rural areas by 15 percent this year, to \$41.9 billion, Wen said.

Hamas rejects al-Qaida offer

Hamas officials shrugged off the support offered by al-Qaida's No. 2 leader, saying Sunday the Palestinian militant group has a different ideology than the terror network and won election through a moderate approach to Islam.

In a video aired Saturday by Al-Jazeera, Ayman al-Zawahiri called for jihad, or holy war, to reclaim Palestinian lands and implied al-Qaida's support for Hamas' refusal to recognize Israel despite international pressure since the militant Islamic group swept parliamentary elections in January.

A Hamas official in Gaza, speaking on condition of anonymity because the movement did not want to formally respond to al-Zawahiri's support, said: "Hamas believes that Islam is completely different to the ideology of Mr. al-Zawahiri.

"Our battle is against the Israeli occupation, and our only concern is to restore our rights and serve our people. We have no links with any group or element outside Palestine," the official said.

MBIHE-MOKELE, CONGO

'Hippie chimps' failing to dinner

Scientists are struggling to save the fast-disappearing bonobo, the gentle "hippie chimp" known for resolving squabbles through sex rather than violence.

Unfortunately, bonobos are prized by Congolese for their tasty meat, and many villagers who are illegally hunting the wiry, wizen-faced apes do not realize how close their prey is to extinction.

The animals are known for greeting rival groups with genital handshakes and sensual body rubs.

Despite all the sex, however, female bonobos give birth to a single infant only once every five years, making the species especially vulnerable.

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NOTICE OF PROPOSED PLAN AND PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

BRAC
PMO WEST

Proposed Action at Operable Unit 5/IR-02, Former Naval Air Station Alameda and Alameda Annex

The U.S. Navy, in coordination with state and environmental regulatory agencies, encourages the public to comment on its Proposed Plan to clean up contaminated shallow groundwater at Operable Unit 5/IR-02 located on the former Naval Air Station Alameda (Alameda Point) and the Alameda Annex, in Alameda, California.

The Operable Unit 5/IR-02 area is located east of Main Street. The contaminated groundwater underlies portions of the United States Coast Guard Housing, the George F. Miller Elementary School, the Woodstock Child Development Center, and adjacent Alameda Annex areas including portions of the Bayport development. There are no drinking water wells in these areas. Water service is supplied by the East Bay Municipal Utility District, from a separate source. There is no immediate risk to children, residents, or others in these areas. Benzene and naphthalene are the groundwater contaminants. The Proposed Plan provides a summary of investigations and evaluations performed at the site, including a remedial investigation and human health and ecological risk assessments. Based on data collected and analyzed for the site, the Navy proposes to clean up contaminated groundwater to address potential long-term risks.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD
The Navy invites interested members of the public to review and comment on the Proposed Plan during the 30-day public comment period, which is from March 6th through April 4th, 2006. Public comments must be submitted in writing and postmarked or e-mailed no later than April 4, 2006, or provided during the public meeting on March 15, 2006. Please send all comments to: Mr. Thomas Macchiarella, BRAC Environmental Coordinator, BRAC Program Management Office West, 1455 Frazee Road, Suite 900, San Diego, California 92108, Thomas.macchiarella@navy.mil, (619) 532-0907, fax (619) 532-0940.

PUBLIC MEETING
The Navy will host a public meeting to discuss the Proposed Plan, answer questions and accept public comments.
Date: Wednesday, March 15, 2006
Time: 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Alameda Point, 950 West Mall Square, Building 1, Room 201, Alameda, CA

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Copies of the Proposed Plan, Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study, and other site documents are available for review at:

Alameda Point
950 West Mall Square
Building 1, Rooms 240-241
Alameda, California 94502

Alameda Public Library
2200 A Central Avenue
Alameda, California 94502
(510) 747-7777

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this project, please contact
Mr. Thomas Macchiarella, BRAC Environmental Coordinator, at (619) 532-0907,
fax (619) 532-0940, or e-mail Thomas.macchiarella@navy.mil.

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