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Chem-Bio News

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CB Daily Report

Chem-Bio News

IRAQI WHOSE LIES MADE THE CASE FOR WAR LOOKS ON FROM AFAR

By Martin Chulov

The Guardian (UK)
June 28, 2009

“When the Iraqi who could be considered more responsible than any other for the US invasion six years ago quietly returned last March to the land his lies helped shape, Iraq was entering one of its most stable and promising phases in six years of turmoil

Rafid Ahmed Alwan – otherwise known as Curveball – slipped back into Baghdad after 10 years of exile in Germany.

Before the invasion, Curveball had become the CIA's most valuable source on Iraq's fictitious chemical and biological weapons programme, a man who underscored the White House's push for war through a litany of lies that later claimed the careers of the former secretary of state Colin Powell, and CIA chief George Tenet.

Both were forced to admit they had gone to war partly on the word of a collaborator whom no American agency had even debriefed until one year after Baghdad fell.”

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“The plump 42-year-old saw none of his old friends or colleagues during his visit; nor did he bother the alumni of Baghdad University of Technology – a campus still reeling from the conduct of its former student.”

The full article can be found at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jun/28/curveball-iraq-cia-us>

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WHITE PHOSPHORUS TAMED

By James Urquhart
Chemistry World
June 26, 2009

“Scientists in the UK and Finland have shown that white phosphorous, a highly reactive and potentially toxic form of the element, can be stabilised in air indefinitely when imprisoned inside a self-assembling molecular cage. The discovery could allow for safer storage of the material and other hazardous substances and potentially may be useful for soaking up harmful chemicals in the environment, say the researchers.

Last year, a team led by Jonathan Nitschke at the University of Cambridge, UK, developed a molecular cage from iron ions held together by organic linkers, and demonstrated it could encapsulate small hydrophobic molecules. Now, Nitschke and colleagues have discovered that white phosphorous molecules, which are hydrophobic, neatly match the size and shape of the cage's cavity. Interestingly, the contained phosphorous does not spontaneously combust in air as it would under normal conditions. What's more, the phosphorous is not

permanently trapped but can be released by flooding it out with benzene."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.rsc.org/chemistryworld/News/2009/June/26060901.asp>

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RUSSIA BOOSTS SECURITY AT CHEMICAL WEAPONS SITES

Global Security Newswire

June 29, 2009

"Military guards and paramilitary security units with special gear and guard dogs will be in charge of our facilities," said Russian chemical weapons official Nikolai Khlebnikov. "Antiterror forces, armed with automatic weapons, grenade launchers and sniper rifles, have been formed to tighten the defense in line with the General Staff's instruction."

The sites are also to be placed under continuous watch through use of security technology, he said.

Khlebnikov ruled out the possibility of "unauthorized entry ... into the storage facilities."

The full article can be found at: http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20090629_1572.php

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RE-THINK URGED ON UK NUCLEAR DETERRENT

By Gavin Cordon

The Independent (UK)

June 30, 2009

"The Government was today facing renewed pressure to re-think its decision to update its Trident nuclear deterrent in the face of growing cost pressures on the defence budget.

A report by a high-level commission for the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) think-tank urges ministers to consider whether the submarine-based system is the most cost-effective way of maintaining Britain's "minimum" deterrent capability.

The recommendation is one of a raft of proposals, covering the whole spectrum of Britain's national security, made by the commission chaired by former defence secretary Lord Robertson of Port Ellen and former Liberal Democrat leader Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon.

Other members include former chief of the defence staff Lord Guthrie of Craigiebank, former UK ambassador to the United Nations Sir Jeremy Greenstock, and former Association of Chief Police Officers president Sir Chris Fox.

In its report, the commission called for major innovations in defence policy to adapt to the "post 9/11 and post recession world", with investment in cyber-warfare, command and control, and the creation of a joint civilian-military stabilisation and reconstruction taskforce.

It said that there should also be strengthening of the special forces in order to deal with a Mumbai-style terror attack in the UK.

At the same time it called for a review of £24 billion of existing defence equipment projects with a view to making cuts, with the new aircraft carriers, the joint strike fighter, the Type 45 destroyers and the Astute class submarines all "in the frame".

On Trident, the commission said that while it believes that Britain does still need a minimum UK deterrent, this should be reviewed as part of a wider strategic review of UK security going beyond just defence.

It suggested that one option could be a further life-extension for the ageing Vanguard class submarines which carry the Trident missiles beyond the current five-year run-on to 2024 already planned.

It said that Britain should be prepared to put part or all of its nuclear weapons capability on the table as part of international nuclear disarmament negotiations."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/rethink-urged-on-uk-nuclear-deterrent-1724767.html>

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GOVERNMENTS SEEK TO AVOID RADIOACTIVE CATASTROPHE IN CENTRAL ASIA

UN Development Programme Press Release

June 29, 2009

"High-Level International Forum reaches unanimous agreement on joint declaration to consolidate efforts to resolve problems of radioactive and toxic waste in the region."

"More than 100 high-level Central Asian country delegates and representatives from international organizations, donors, diplomatic corps and other stakeholders met in Geneva today to develop concrete measures to address the challenge of radioactive waste in Central Asia.

Uranium tailing deposits left over from mining during the cold war in Kyrgystan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan contain more than 800 million tons of radioactive and toxic waste. Much of this waste sits in precarious ponds held back by unstable dams and alongside international rivers and watersheds. Overstrained budgets and lack of capacity have prevented these countries from dealing adequately with the problem. UNDP organized the Geneva conference as part of an attempt to identify viable solutions and to prevent an

environmental catastrophe.”

The full article can be found at: <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/june/governments-seek-to-avoid-radioactive-catastrophe-in-central-asia.en>

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WARREN HOSTS NATIONAL-LEVEL EXERCISE

By Senior Airman Daryl Knee
US Air Force Space Command News Release
June 26, 2009

“F.E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyo. -- A simulated terrorist attack on a 90th Missile Wing ICBM launch facility provided the exercise scenario for Nuclear Weapon Accident/Incident Exercise 2009.

This national-level exercise involving 11 federal agencies and 1,300 personnel was the largest and most complex exercise ever conducted at a missile base.

Accident response and associated consequent management procedures are routinely practiced by local responders and the 90th Missile Wing; however, this exercise was made far more complex by the criminal aspect associated with terrorist activities.

Close and careful coordination with a number of federal agencies, particularly the FBI, was essential to gather information swiftly to identify and capture the terrorists responsible for the attack.

The exercise challenged responders in several ways. Balancing the need for personnel safety in a potentially hazardous situation while allowing law enforcement officials to gather time critical evidence for criminal response, required a clear understanding of the risks involved.

Minutes counted in determining which terrorist group was responsible and developing courses of action to track and capture them.

As response elements arrived from across the nation, the wing's initial response force transitioned to a response task force with a formal transfer of incident command between the wing commander Col. Mike Morgan, 90th MW commander, and the Twentieth Air Force Commander Maj. Gen. Roger W. Burg.

General Burg then led the federal agency response for consequence management along with supporting the FBI in their counter-terrorism mission.

In addition to the FBI, major exercise players included the Department of Energy providing weapon system technical expertise, Homeland Security and FEMA for consequence management, US Northern Command for operational command of the IRF/RTF, the State of Wyoming and the Wyoming Guard for initial response and logistical support, and Air Force Space Command for filling key RTF leadership positions.

"This is the first time the country has brought together military operators with a very robust interagency package," said Exercise Director and Director of Nuclear Support at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency U. S. Army Brig. Gen. Ernie Audino "This is a complex exercise with many moving parts." "It is critical to make the U.S. military the best in the world," he continued. "And it's not just the extensive training we go through, but it's how we capture the lessons learned from that training. It is an endless, necessary cycle."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.afspc.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123156188>

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NNSA ANNOUNCES REMOVAL OF LAST HIGHLY ENRICHED URANIUM FROM ROMANIA; AIR SHIPMENT OF RUSSIAN-ORIGIN SPENT FUEL

US National Nuclear Security Administration News Release

June 30, 2009

"The National Nuclear Security Administration today announced the final shipments of Russian-origin highly enriched uranium (HEU) nuclear fuel from Romania. The material was removed and returned to Russia by air for storage at two secure nuclear facilities, making Romania the first country to remove all HEU since President Obama outlined his commitment to securing all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within four years. This was also the first time NNSA has shipped "spent" HEU by airplane, a development that will help accelerate efforts to meet the President's objective."

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"The shipments are part of NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI), which also removed all U.S.-origin HEU from Romania in 2008. NNSA worked in close cooperation with Romania, Russia, and the International Atomic Energy Agency to return the material.

In one shipment, 23.7 kilograms (52 pounds) of spent HEU stored at a research reactor in Magurele, Romania, was packaged into Russian TUK-19 specialized transportation casks. The casks were then secured in shipping containers, transported in an armed convoy from the reactor site to a nearby airport, loaded onto an Antonov-124 cargo plane, and flown to a secure facility in Russia near Chelyabinsk.

In addition, 30 kilograms (66 pounds) of fresh HEU from a reactor in Pitesti was shipped by air to a secure Russian facility near Dimitrovgrad."

The full article can be found at: <http://nnsa.energy.gov/news/2408.htm>

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SOME ECZEMA SUFFERERS MORE PRONE TO SMALLPOX AND OTHER VIRUSES

“Widespread smallpox vaccination would pose some new concerns,” said Lisa Beck, M.D., an associate professor of both Dermatology and Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center, and the study’s lead author. “Historical records suggest that eczema patients are at heightened risk for developing a serious infection from the active vaccinia virus – a cousin to the smallpox virus – that’s used in smallpox vaccines. Worse, since halting these immunizations some thirty years ago, the incidence of eczema has been doubling every fifteen years.”

Beck said that an estimated 20 percent of children now suffer from eczema.

“These infections could prove fatal in as many as 20 percent of cases,” she added. “More shockingly, they not only occurred in eczema patients who were immunized themselves, but also in eczema patients who simply came in contact with other recently vaccinated individuals.”

In March 2007, a newly immunized U.S. Army soldier (some armed service personnel and health care workers continue to receive smallpox vaccine) had his deployment temporarily delayed and returned home to wait with his family in Indiana. When he accidentally infected his 2-year-old son (who had eczema), the boy became seriously ill, making national headlines and rekindling appreciation for the potential risks of the smallpox vaccine.

Just last week, Beck and colleagues nationwide released findings from a multi-center study aiming to gain a better profile of which eczema sufferers are most predisposed to serious skin infections. The study, funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease, drew nearly 900 volunteers across seven research sites. Participants answered questions about their eczema, whether or not they’d experienced eczema herpeticum (or EH, a widespread viral skin infection that’s unique to eczema patients and caused by the herpes simplex virus) or bacterial skin infections, plus whether or not they had asthma or food allergies. Their potential for sensitization to other common allergens was analyzed, as were their levels of key immune cells (and immune cell mediators).”

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“This abnormal reaction is dominated by the wrong kind of immune cell – a Type 2 helper T cell.

“These overly-excited Type 2 helper cells rush into action, causing extreme inflammation,” Beck said. “Unfortunately these particular T cells inhibit the manufacturing of important antimicrobial proteins and hinder the skin’s ability to serve as a strong barrier, thereby weakening the body’s ability to fend off common pathogens, including viruses and bacteria.”

Insights gleaned from this research could make clinicians better aware of which patients would require the closest monitoring after vaccination, Beck said.

“In the wake of a biological attack, we might be forced to immunize everyone within a

certain radius, regardless of the potential personal danger," she said."

The full article can be found at: <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/news/story/index.cfm?id=2537>

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