

CIA: Russia, China key arms sellers

Report refutes Clinton claim

By Bill Gertz
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The CIA has identified Russia and China as key providers of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology around the world, according to a report by the agency's Non-Proliferation Center.

"Foreign weapons of mass destruction procurement managers in countries of concern have responded to Western export controls by seeking dual-use goods largely from Russia and China," the CIA said in a semiannual report to Congress. The report was released to Congress in December.

Nations seeking nuclear, chemical and biological weapons also are "looking more to each other as a source of ballistic missile systems, critical missile components and related technology," said the report, covering January through June of 1998.

Still, support from China and

Russia will be needed by these countries to turn the components and technology into effective weapons systems, the report said.

"China has provided extensive support in the past to Pakistan's weapons of mass destruction programs and some assistance continues," the report said.

The report's conclusion on Chinese support appears to contradict a recent declaration by President Clinton that China was not selling nuclear weapons know-how to nations seeking the weapons. The presidential declaration opened the way for U.S. nuclear technology sales to China.

Russia's sale of missile-related goods to Iran "accelerated Iranian development of the Shahab-3" medium-range missile, the report said.

Iran was identified by the agency as one of the most active nations seeking both unconventional and advanced conventional arms, and focused its efforts at gaining weapons know-how from Russia and China.

"During the reporting period, entities in Russia and China continued to supply missile-related

goods and technology to Iran," the report said, noting that Tehran is seeking a domestic medium-range missile production capability.

The report said Iran has begun producing the 800-mile-range Shahab-3 missile that was flight-tested for the first time in July, and is building a longer-range version known as the Shahab-4.

Also, Iran has been purchasing "biotechnical equipment" that could be used for making deadly germ weapons, the report said, noting that Tehran also has stocks of bombs filled with chemical weapons.

Nuclear-related goods from Russia will help Iran's nuclear weapons research and development program, the report said.

Egypt also was identified in the report as continuing to develop its new short-range Vector missile program and obtaining ballistic missile components from North Korea.

Libya also obtained ballistic missile equipment, material and technology, but the report did not identify the origin. It obtained spare parts and other goods for military aircraft from nations in

the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

As for North Korea, the CIA said Pyongyang attempted to obtain raw materials for ballistic missiles, but does not need "significant outside assistance" for its domestic missiles or weapons of mass destruction.

"We assess that North Korea has produced enough plutonium for at least one, possibly two, nuclear weapons," the report said.

The report made no mention of the suspected underground nuclear facility that North Korea is building at Kumchangni.

China and North Korea provided Pakistan with support for ballistic missile programs. "Such assistance is critical for Islamabad's efforts to produce ballistic missiles," the report said.

Syria obtained chemical weapons material in the first half of 1998, and continued work on a solid-propellant rocket motor production facility. Russia delivered advanced anti-tank guided missiles to Syria last year and "wants to keep its predominant position as a key supplier of arms to Syria," the CIA said.