

Pakistan Thought to Possess Atomic Bomb

Intelligence reports that Pakistan may have all the components needed for a bomb are raising foreign policy problems

IT is virtually certain that Pakistan now has all the necessary parts to produce nuclear weapons, congressional and private analysts say. This capability, which the Reagan Administration has yet to acknowledge publicly, is bringing to the surface a long-simmering debate on American foreign policy in South Asia. The White House may have to choose between continuing to provide Pakistan with foreign aid or halting aid and possibly crippling American efforts to support rebels in Afghanistan.

The Administration has recognized for some time that Pakistan has been making steady progress in developing an indigenous nuclear weapons capacity. But Leonard S. Spector, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, says there is little doubt now about Pakistan's ability to build a bomb. Knowledgeable congressional sources confirm Spector's assessment of Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability. Pentagon officials familiar with the issue declined to comment on the matter.

The determination by American analysts that Pakistan now has a bomb, or at least collected all the necessary components, has become clear only in recent months. This fall there were reports that Pakistan was producing highly enriched uranium at its Kahuta enrichment facility for use in a bomb. Since then new intelligence reports provided to Congress have confirmed earlier findings, says Spector, whose third annual report on the spread of nuclear weapons, *Going Nuclear*, was recently released.

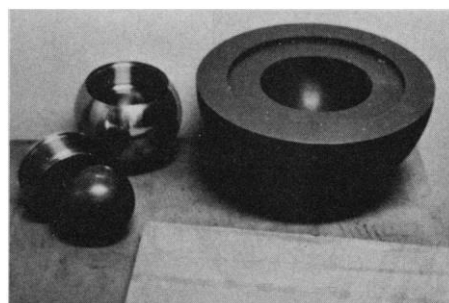
The Foreign Assistance Act requires the President to certify annually that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear weapon. If he cannot make this finding, then all military and economic aid must be cut off. Should Pakistan or any nonweapons state detonate a weapon, suspension of American aid also is required. But some members of Congress may not wait for such an event. Senator John Glenn (D-OH), chairman of the Governmental Affairs subcommittee on energy, nuclear proliferation, and government processes, aides say, may push for Congress to intervene.

Concern about Pakistan's weapons program goes beyond its relations with the United States. Pakistan's ability to produce

nuclear weapons also will heighten tensions with neighboring India and may cause it to intensify its weapons activity. India detonated a nuclear device in 1974. Spector observes in his book that the Soviet Union also may be troubled by Pakistan's weapons development program. It is conceivable, he claims, that the Soviet-backed air force of Afghanistan could launch an air strike against key facilities to prevent Pakistan from building a nuclear stockpile.

Pakistani officials deny that they have developed a bomb. Abdul Qadeer Khan, head of that country's nuclear enrichment program, on 1 March denied an Indian press report that quoted him as saying Pakistan had built an atomic bomb. Kuldip Nayar, a prominent Indian journalist, conducted the interview. An Indian Embassy spokesman in Washington, Shiv Mukherjee, said "the accuracy of the report is self-evident. We have grave concerns about the Pakistani program."

The Pakistan weapons issue has heightened congressional interest in the direction and effectiveness of Administration policy on nuclear nonproliferation. House and Senate panels are already focusing on Israel's



Bomb core. Shown here is a model of what are alleged to be components of an Israeli nuclear weapon, including a shiny hollow beryllium sphere with its cap removed. It is meant to encase the small, dark plutonium core. The larger, half-sphere at right apparently represents explosive material that when detonated would trigger a nuclear explosion. The photograph is one of a series taken by a former technician, Mordechai Vanunu, at the Dimona underground nuclear facility in Israel.

extensive nuclear weapons stockpile and manufacturing capacity in light of information provided by Mordechai Vanunu, a former technician at the Dimona nuclear complex; potential threats posed by political instabilities in nations with emerging weapons manufacturing capacity; and inadequate coordination among federal agencies that track weapons development activities overseas.

Administration concern about Pakistan's mastery of this technology was expressed most recently in a 16 February speech delivered at the Islamabad Institute of Strategic Studies. Deane R. Hinton, the outgoing Ambassador to Pakistan, stressed that testing a bomb could force Congress to cut off foreign and military aid. "Soon Pakistan will have to choose between the renunciation of nuclear weapons, their overt development, or continuation of a policy of ambiguity," said Hinton.

Richard T. Kennedy, ambassador-at-large at the Department of State, testified on 25 February before the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs, that the "purpose of the speech was simply to impress on the audience, a very broad audience . . . the seriousness with which the U.S. views the situation." State Department officials say that Hinton's remarks do not necessarily mean that the Administration is accusing Pakistan of having a bomb or being ready to assemble one.

Nevertheless, informed congressional sources say "it is going to be extremely difficult for the President to certify that Pakistan does not possess a nuclear weapon." Indeed, Glenn notes that Congress and the Administration do not have to await a detonation to declare Pakistan a weapons state. "We are getting beyond the point where it is necessary to test a bomb in order to know it works." An explosion, he observes is only necessary for tweaking the performance of the device.

Hinton in his speech, in fact, warned Pakistan that "it is an open question whether the President could so certify [that Pakistan does not have a bomb] were he to conclude that Pakistan had in hand, but not assembled all needed components for a nuclear explosive device." House and Senate aides familiar with the Pakistan issue say the White House does not want to cut off aid to Pakistan. So the Administration may have to compromise on its nuclear nonproliferation goals as it applies to Pakistan. Thus, Kennedy and other State Department officials decline to say how they will define nuclear weapons capability, nor will they state whether unassembled components are tantamount to possessing a bomb. ■

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