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WILL IT HELP DEVELOP WEAPONS?

## Concerns arise about ISU center

A former lobbyist for the university warns that 'the transfer of weapons technology to certain countries will be an issue.'

By THOMAS R. O'DONNELL

OF THE REGISTER'S AMES BUREAU

Ames, Ia. — Iowa State University is proudly touting its new International Institute of Theoretical and Applied Physics, but some experts warn that if not carefully monitored, the center could help some countries develop nuclear weapons.

University leaders downplayed the worries, saying the research to be done at ISU would have little application to weapons technology.

The center, supported by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO, is patterned after the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, founded in 1964 by Pakistani Nobel laureate Mohammed Abdus Salam. UNESCO gave approval for the new institute last month, choosing ISU over seven other proposals.

The Ames project, to begin next July, will bring hundreds of scientists, many from Third World countries, here to study and do research at existing ISU facilities.

But questions have been raised about the Trieste center's possible connection to the development of nuclear weapons and missiles in countries such as Iran, Iraq, China, Pakistan and India. Officials at the Italian center say they customarily ignore whether visiting scientists from other nations are working on military or non-military projects.

Fears about the connection prompted a former lobbyist for ISU to warn that if it established the center "the transfer of weapons technology to certain countries will be an issue. At the very least it could become a public relations nightmare."

ISU officials say there is only a slim chance scientists visiting the institute here could take away knowledge useful in building weapons.

"If I were interested in that area, I would not come to Ames, Iowa," ISU Provost John Kozak said.

James Vary, acting director of the institute and an ISU physics professor, said research at Iowa State University is devoted to a different area of physics that would have little application to weapons.

"It's a question of who has the expertise to help them, and I don't see the people around here as having that kind of expertise," Vary said of weapons technology. "Most of the people in the weapons industry don't have an interest in what we do."

But an expert on the proliferation of weapons technology, particularly among Third World countries, said ISU should nonetheless treat the program carefully.

David Albright, a physicist and

president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington, D.C., think tank, said,

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## If U.S. returns to agency, it could pay off big for ISU

FROM THE REGISTER'S AMES BUREAU

Ames, Ia. — Iowa State University may find itself caught in the middle of a controversy over U.S. membership in a United Nations agency.

The United States dropped out of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, known as UNESCO, in 1985 after charging the organization with mismanagement and politicization. Since then, there has been a change in leadership in the agency, and the Clinton administration is said to be considering rejoining UNESCO.

That would be good for ISU, university officials said last week. The school recently received UNESCO backing, including some money, for an International Institute of Theoretical and Applied Physics. Even more help could be available if the United States rejoins UNESCO.

"The technical limits that UNESCO has at the moment would be reduced if the U.S. joined UNESCO," said James Vary, acting director of the institute and a physics professor at ISU.

ISU Provost John Kozak said the United States would have to be a member "for any significant dollars to flow from UNESCO to the United States."

Kozak and Vary said that when they met with UNESCO representatives in Paris early last May to present ISU's proposal for the institute, no officials asked them to lobby for U.S. re-entry into the agency. But officials did say "it would be nice if the United States were to rejoin UNESCO," Kozak added.

Soon after Vary and Kozak returned, however, Stuart Hadley, ISU's interim director of federal relations, sent a memo to U.S. Rep. Neal Smith, D-Ia., noting ISU's shot at gaining UNESCO approval for the institute.

Hadley wrote: "It is also apparent UNESCO officials are interested in seeing the U.S. rejoin UNESCO. If you do come to the conclusion that the U.S. should rejoin UNESCO, it could be very beneficial to us in our quest for securing dollars for the potential center."

# Some fear ISU center may help develop nuclear arms

## ISU

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"Any theoretical physics institute is going to have a high capacity for research" — including research applicable to military technology. Technology available at the ISU center, such as supercomputers, could be misused, he said.

### Contacted by Salam

Vary said that two years ago a representative of Salam contacted ISU about sponsoring a counterpart to the Trieste center. ISU was attractive because of its reputation for educating international scholars and the presence of the Ames Laboratory, a U.S. Department of Energy facility operated by the university. The Ames Lab was the source of fuel for the first nuclear weapons, but Vary said he knows of no one at the lab currently doing weapons-related research.

ISU began work on bringing the institute to Ames. Meanwhile, Kent Hall, ISU's director of federal relations, issued a memo last January, shortly before he left to rejoin the staff of a North Dakota senator. The memo cited a Washington Post article tying the Trieste center to weapons proliferation.

"At the very least it could become a public relations nightmare," Hall warned.

The Post article, which appeared last December, quoted director Salam as saying the Italian center ignores whether researchers from the Third World are pursuing peaceful or military goals.

"We have this official policy that work must be done for peaceful purposes, but it's more official than kept

## NEW ISU PHYSICS INSTITUTE

Here is a look at Iowa State University's new International Institute of Theoretical and Applied Physics:

- Established in cooperation with the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Will work closely in coordinating programs with Trieste center.

- ISU to provide \$500,000 of the initial annual budget of \$1.2 million. UNESCO to contribute between \$100,000 and \$200,000. ISU seeking donations from foundations for an additional \$600,000.

- Expected to start next July and expected to bring in several hundred scholars each year. Scientific programs would focus on theoretical physics and closely overlapping areas in chemistry, engineering, math and agriculture.

- Designed to help scientists from developing countries with research and teaching in their own countries and to strengthen science and technology there.

distinguish between military or peaceful purposes for the sophisticated research done at the center, he said.

The Trieste center has been host to scientists from a number of countries believed to be engaged in research on nuclear weapons, including India, which exploded a nuclear bomb in 1974. Pakistan, which has said it has nuclear-weapons capabilities, also has sent researchers to the center. Neither country has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is aimed at halting the spread of nuclear weapons technology.

Iraq, which has been accused of having a secret nuclear-weapons program, also has sent scientists to the Italian center.

Hall's memo suggested that ISU develop a policy on the issue, perhaps refusing to accept scientists from nations that have not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. "Unfortunately, some countries, Iran and Iraq, have signed the treaty

Kozak said no policy has been formulated. "We haven't developed those policy issues. Quite frankly, the focus here is in such a different direction than nuclear weapons technology," he said, and such a policy does not seem urgent.

### Possible Application

Kozak acknowledged that some of what the scientists learn at ISU could be applied to weapons technology.

"It's the same question you would ask if you were teaching a freshman physics course" in which nuclear energy is discussed. "Isn't it possible in some way that those concepts could have relevance to a completely different area? ... The honest answer is yes."

Vary agreed that it's possible research at ISU could be applied to weapons. "Devious minds can do just about anything they want. ... It's not our goal to be a gatekeeper on everybody's basic research."

"Our long-term goal is to build communication and dialogue with (Third World) scientists so they are participants in economic development," he said. "That would reduce tensions and reduce the desires and fears people have that lead them to build up military weapons."

Hall's successor, Lowell Christy, said fears over the Trieste center's spreading weapons technology are "a residue of the Cold War."

"Yes, indeed, some Iraqi scientists went there," he said. "What they derived there in terms of translation into nuclear weapons was negligible."

### Warning

Albright, the president of the Institute for Science and International Security, and other analysts said they, too, doubted work done at Trieste had much application to weapons technology. Nonetheless, they warned that administrators must be on guard against such a possibility.

Technology which is known now can be misused," Albright said. "At the same time, you can't put a fence