

washingtonpost.com

Pentagon pressing for new rapid-strike weapon: report

Reuters
Sunday, May 28, 2006; 7:43 PM

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Pentagon is seeking congressional approval for development of a new weapon able to strike distant targets an hour after they are detected, a newspaper reported on Monday.

The International Herald Tribune said the weapon would be a non-nuclear version of the submarine-launched Trident-2 missile and be part of a president's arsenal when considering a pre-emptive attack.

The report quoted military officials as saying it could be used to hit terrorist camps, enemy missile sites, suspected caches of weapons of mass destruction and other urgent threats.

General James Cartwright, head of the U.S. Strategic Command, said the system would allow U.S. forces to attack targets conventionally and precisely and "limit the collateral damage."

The Pentagon would like the system available in two years, the report said.

But the program has run into resistance from lawmakers concerned it could increase the risk of an accidental nuclear war. Under the Pentagon plan, both non-nuclear and nuclear-tipped variants of the Trident-2 missile would be loaded on the same submarines.

"There is great concern this could be destabilizing in terms of deterrence and nuclear policy," the newspaper quoted Senate Armed Services Committee member Jack Reed as saying.

"It would be hard to determine if a missile coming out a Trident submarine is conventional or nuclear," the Rhode Island Democrat said.

The House Armed Services Committees have asked the Bush administration to develop a plan to minimize the risk.

© 2006 Reuters

Advertisement



Advertisement

