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USADI Commentary

Clock Is Ticking and Iran's Nuclear Program Moves Forward

As clock is ticking, Iran's hide-and-seek game is helping advance its nuclear program to the point of no return. Thanks to Europe's big three - Britain, France and Germany - which struck an agreement with Iran last October, the mullahs' nuclear weapons program is moving forward while they play a nuclear shell game with the UN's nuclear watchdog.

Iran's refusal to cooperate fully with the agency "fits a long-term pattern of denial and deception that can only be designed to mask Iran's military nuclear program" said Kenneth Brill, US ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Wednesday. His comments came following the IAEA's damning report released a day earlier.

The report chronicles a long list of deceit, defiance, contradictory accounts, last minute information, and denial of access to some key sites: the same old behavior but with a new bag of tricks. It charges that agency's inspectors had found more traces of highly enriched uranium that could be bomb-grade and that Iran had admitted to importing parts for sophisticated P-2 centrifuges to enrich uranium, going back on claims it built them domestically.

In the mid-1980's, Tehran's leaders concluded that they needed a non-conventional arsenal to gain the upper hand and fulfill their hegemonic designs in the Persian Gulf region. They adopted asymmetric warfare as the cornerstone of their military doctrine. It would be naive to suggest that Iran's rulers have since had a change of heart. If anything, the recent reports about Iran's increasing meddling in Iraq indicate the mullahs are still bent on spreading their influence in the region.

Iran's primary objective in its sham cooperation with the IAEA is to drag on the inspection process by giving the impression that inspections are really working. That the inspection regime is shedding new light about Tehran's secret nuclear program does not mean it has actually stymied the program. What is at stake is preventing the mullahs from developing a nuclear arsenal. The effectiveness of the IAEA inspections comes in second.

Tehran does not mind the IAEA's stunning disclosures provided they do not impede its one and only goal: to get the bomb. While the EU-3 boast of the effectiveness of nuclear dialogue with the mullahs, conducting inspections just for the sake of having inspections, as time is running out, is a recipe for disaster.

Given their lucrative business dealings with Tehran and geopolitical jockeying in the region, the EU-3 have reason for conciliation with Tehran. However, the specter of a nuclear armed Iran - the most active state sponsor of terrorism - is far too ominous to let appeasers in the EU dictate policy toward Tehran.

For now, the United Nations must take up Iran's breach of its nuclear obligations. In the long term, however, only a regime change would ensure a WMD-free Iran. To this end, Washington and other Western capitals should embrace democratic opposition forces that are working to unseat the ruling mullahs.

U.S. Says Iran Hiding Nuke Bomb Program from UN

VIENNA - The United States said on Wednesday that Iran continues to cover up a nuclear weapons program and that the latest report by the U.N. atomic watchdog had only made this more apparent.

"I think that this persistent refusal to fully cooperate (with U.N. inspectors) fits a long-term pattern of denial and deception that can only be designed to mask Iran's military nuclear program," the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. in Vienna, Kenneth Brill, told reporters.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Tuesday in a confidential report on Iran, obtained by Reuters, there were two major issues it must resolve. First is the origin of enriched uranium traces found at sites in Iran, which some diplomats on the IAEA board say had raised concerns Iran was secretly enriching uranium for use in weapons.

The second is Iran's centrifuge program, especially its interest in advanced P2 enrichment centrifuges capable of making bomb-grade uranium. The report said Iran had admitted importing P2 parts and may have had interest in parts for thousands of centrifuges -- contrary to what it had previously said.

"Unanswered questions continue to be the hallmark of Iranian cooperation with the (IAEA)," Brill said.

"The more the IAEA digs, the more problems it finds. It is equally clear that the IAEA is not buying Iranian explanations on the key questions and that the list of outstanding issues is larger than it was in March," he said.

Reuters, June 2, 2004

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

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Guardian (UK)

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Iran Uranium Find Boosts Nuclear Bomb Fears

Suspicion that Iran has been enriching uranium as part of a secret nuclear bomb programme strengthened last night when UN nuclear inspectors said they were not satisfied with Tehran's explanations over the discovery of highly enriched uranium at two sites in the country.

A confidential report on the nuclear programme from the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna also said Iran has been purchasing parts abroad for sophisticated bomb-making equipment while claiming to have manufactured the parts at home.

The report by the IAEA chief, Mohamed ElBaradei ahead of an agency board meeting in two weeks, credited Iran with providing greater access to, and information on, its nuclear projects almost 18 months into the mystery saga of whether it has a secret nuclear bomb programme.

But it was clear that the Iranians remain engaged in a high-stakes game of brinkmanship, having provided crucial information for the report only as recently as last Sunday, despite their pledges of unfettered access for and full cooperation with the UN agency.

It was also clear that a proclaimed breakthrough by Britain, Germany, and France after negotiations with Tehran last October had not brought the full stop to uranium enrichment activities the Europeans believed they had secured.

Tehran insists it has never enriched uranium beyond a minimum level and that traces of high enriched uranium (HEU) found by UN inspectors derive from equipment imported from Pakistan via the recently uncovered black market in nuclear technology masterminded by the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

While failing to close the book on the HEU mystery, last night's report obtained by the Guardian suggested strongly the inspectors do not believe the Iranian version.

It said HEU enriched to 36% had been found localised at two sites in Iran.

As recently as February, the Iranians had insisted that they had made the parts for the P-2 centrifuges themselves. They changed their tune on Sunday as the latest report was being finalised, admitting that they had bought some components on the international market.

The Los Angeles Times

June 2, 2004

Agency Details Iran's Ambitious Pursuit of Advanced Centrifuges

WASHINGTON — International inspectors have found new evidence that Iran engaged in a more ambitious program than it had admitted to develop advanced machines for producing material that could be used in nuclear weapons, according to a report obtained Tuesday.

Discoveries by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, contradicted previous claims by Iran that its scientists had made little attempt to manufacture sophisticated Pakistani-designed P2 centrifuges.

IAEA inspectors also found traces of weapons-grade uranium that indicated Iran either had imported nuclear-related components from a country other than Pakistan or has made more progress than previously known in developing its own ability to produce material capable of being used in nuclear weapons.

The latest in a yearlong series of reports by the IAEA criticizing Iran's nuclear program said serious questions remained about the scope and intentions of Tehran's atomic activities, but it did not say evidence of a weapons program had been found...

Jon B. Wolfsthal, a nonproliferation expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said after reviewing the report that it did not answer the question of Tehran's ultimate nuclear intentions.

"It's clear from this report that we have not gotten a clear picture of Iran's program," Wolfsthal said. "There are still major gaps."

The IAEA report focused a particularly harsh light on Iran's efforts to develop the sophisticated P2 centrifuges from designs and components purchased from the black market network run by Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan.

"Important information about the P2 centrifuge program has frequently required repeated requests, and in some cases continues to involve changing or contradictory information," the report said...

The report also said a private contractor working for the Iranian government tried to buy 4,000 magnets for P2 centrifuges and had suggested that Iran might want many more in future.

"They dangled the prospect of buying tens of thousands of magnets," a Western diplomat said in a telephone interview from Vienna. "With two magnets per centrifuge, this looks like more than a small-scale research project."...