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Alalam News Network – Middle East

November 3, 2009

Leader: No Talks if Result Fixed by US

The Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on Tuesday that Tehran rejects any negotiations whose result is pre-determined by the US.

"We do not want any negotiations, the result of which is pre-determined by the United States," Ayatollah Khamenei said in a speech to students on the eve of Wednesday's 30th anniversary of the US embassy seizure by students in 1979.

"A dialogue like this is like a sheep and wolf relation, which the late Imam (Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini) has said that we 'do not want'," the leader added.

Khamenei also warned he will not allow people with "ill-intentions" towards the Islamic republic to "throw out a red carpet for the United States."

He also said that "the US should shed its hegemonic spirit and quit threatening nations, otherwise Iranian nation will not be deceived" by its words and will not forgo the nations interests, independence and freedom."

Ayatollah Khamenei added that as long as the US wanted "to turn back the time and seek dominance over Iran", it could by no means compel the Iranian nation to retreat.

Under a proposal discussed in Vienna in mid-October, the United States, France and Russia wanted Iran to send most of its domestically-produced low enriched uranium (LEU) abroad to be converted into more refined fuel for the Tehran reactor that produces medical isotopes.

The world powers introduced the plan, which was first floated by the Obama administration.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said on Monday that Iran's 'technical and economic' concerns must be taken into account regarding the draft deal.

"We have examined this proposal, we have some technical and economic considerations on that," Mottaki told reporters in the Malaysian capital on Monday.

Mottaki also called for the establishment of a technical commission to review and reconsider Iran's stated issues.

Ayatollah Khamenei's comments came as Iran prepares to mark the seizure of the US embassy 30 years ago that sparked the rupture of relations with Washington.

The commemoration has become one of the cornerstones of the country and every year students gather outside the embassy building in central Tehran and shout "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

<http://www.alalam.ir/english/detail.aspx?id=85752>

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Washington Post

November 4, 2009

Iran Wants To Be Seen As Regional Power: ElBaradei

By Louis Charbonneau

Reuters

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Iran's nuclear program, which Tehran says is only intended to generate electricity, is an attempt to force the world to acknowledge it as a regional power, U.N. nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei said on Wednesday.

"They believe that the nuclear know-how brings prestige, brings power, and they would like to see the U.S. engaging them," he told a forum on nuclear disarmament. "Unfortunately that holds some truth. Iran has been taken seriously since they have developed their program."

Saying Iran's nuclear program was a "means to an end," ElBaradei said Tehran "wants to be recognized as a regional power."

He reiterated the position of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. agency he has led for 12 years and leaves at the end of the month, that there is "no concrete evidence" Tehran is pursuing atomic weapons as Western countries suspect.

The United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China have tried for years to persuade Iran to halt uranium enrichment in exchange for economic and political incentives. Tehran has so far refused to a halt the program.

Speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations, ElBaradei had little to say about talks on a draft nuclear fuel deal among Iran, Russia, the United States and France in Vienna for which he has become an unofficial mediator.

The IAEA fuel proposal calls for Iran to transfer most of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France to turn it into fuel for a reactor that produces isotopes for treating cancer. But diplomats say Iran is reluctant to ship its uranium abroad.

'UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY'

ElBaradei said the proposed deal represented a "unique opportunity" for Iran and the United States to move beyond decades of tension and animosity. He said he hoped for an agreement before he leaves office.

He indicated Iran would have to respond soon to the offer, which he said could help Tehran demonstrate that its nuclear plans are peaceful. "It's an opportunity, but it's also a fleeting opportunity," he said.

U.S. and French officials have said negotiations with Tehran cannot drag on forever and have warned Iran it could face a fourth round of U.N. sanctions.

ElBaradei said he was convinced the Iranians were prepared at one point to stop their enrichment program but that the previous U.S. administration and the three European powers missed an opportunity to end the standoff by imposing conditions on Iran that were "impossible to accept."

"They were ready to stop at an R&D (research and development) level ... that could have not have created any concern for the international community," he said.

President George W. Bush's administration was reluctant to engage Iran, although it relaxed that policy in its final years.

Bush's successor, Barack Obama, has reversed that position, telling Tehran he is ready to engage Iran's leaders without preconditions. Tehran has reacted coolly so far.

Some Western diplomats who have followed the Iran nuclear issue for years have said they do not believe Iran had seriously considered suspending its enrichment program.

ElBaradei, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who vehemently opposed Bush's decision to invade Iraq in March 2003, made clear he believed Bush's policy of refusing to negotiate with either Iran or North Korea was a massive failure.

"Thinking that I shouldn't talk to people I disagree with, not understanding that dialogue is the only way to change behavior, has led us to where we are -- a total mess."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/04/AR2009110403501.html>

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Bloomberg.com
November 4, 2009

Iran Raises Uranium Output as Photos Show Need for Wider Checks

By Jonathan Tirone

Nov. 4 (Bloomberg) -- Satellite photos indicate that Iran has increased production at a uranium mine, underscoring the need for wider UN inspections to determine whether the country is trying to build a nuclear weapon.

Evidence of stepped-up activity at the Gchine mine, near the Persian Gulf coast city of Bandar Abbas, is seen in pictures obtained by Bloomberg News and the Washington-based New America Foundation, according to four nuclear analysts who examined the images. The mine could produce enough uranium to craft at least two atomic bombs a year, experts said.

The photographs, taken on April 26 and Oct. 3 by DigitalGlobe Inc. and GeoEye Inc., two U.S. commercial satellite companies, show Iran increased the rate at which it pumps waste from the mine during the intervening months. Iran has filled one waste pool since November 2008, when a previous photograph was taken, and built a second pond with pipes connecting it to processing tanks that separate the metal from rock.

“Iran’s decision to expand mining and milling at Bandar Abbas seems to validate the suspicions of those who think it was the main uranium site for a covert program,” Jeffrey G. Lewis, nuclear strategy and non-proliferation director at the New America Foundation, a public policy institute, said in an Oct. 20 interview.

The increased uranium production indicates that United Nations inspectors need to widen their field of vision beyond facilities such as Iran’s uranium-enrichment plant in Natanz and its Esfahan conversion facility, Lewis and other analysts said. The UN’s nuclear agency should renew demands to inspect research labs, machine shops and mines including Gchine, they added.

Top Priority

The international community’s top priority should be to gain “considerably more access into the Iranian program as a whole so that there is a verifiable distance between Iran’s option to build a bomb and the exercise of that option,” said Lewis, who formerly ran the nuclear non-proliferation research program at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The U.S. and several allies say Iran’s atomic work is cover for the development of a weapon, while the government in Tehran insists that the program is peaceful and intended for civilian purposes such as electricity generation.

Iran has been under investigation by the UN since 2003 because it concealed nuclear work from the world body’s International Atomic Energy Agency for two decades. It is subject to three sets of UN economic sanctions for ignoring Security Council demands that it suspend uranium enrichment and related work and allow wider inspections.

Weapon Fears

The IAEA said Oct. 29 that it would consult with world powers and Iran after the country failed to fully accept a UN- brokered plan for Russia to process nuclear fuel for a medical- research reactor in Tehran. Iran said its “technical and economic concerns” had to be addressed.

The proposal would slow any effort by Iran to make a weapon with its 1,500-kilogram (3,300-pound) stockpile of low-enriched uranium and, if accepted, improve prospects for international talks aimed at ensuring that the country doesn’t produce a bomb.

Holder of the world’s No. 2 oil and natural gas reserves, Iran has been using about 530 tons of uranium obtained from South Africa in 1982 to fuel its declared enrichment program, centered at the Natanz plant, about 210 kilometers (130 miles) south of Tehran. IAEA inspectors have long sought to establish whether Iran has an alternative fuel source for a nuclear effort running in parallel with the declared program.

Yellowcake

The Gchine site, which Iran no longer allows the IAEA to visit, could produce enough raw uranium for processing into two warheads a year if Iran chose to secretly enrich the uranium to weapons grade, according to calculations by the Verification Research, Training and Information Center, a London-based institute that is a non-governmental observer at the IAEA and funded by European governments.

Gchine has the capacity to produce annually up to 21 tons of milled uranium, or yellowcake, Iran told the Paris-based Nuclear Energy Agency, part of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in 2007. Satellite photographs taken last year showed that the mine was only beginning operations and not working at capacity.

“Although the mill has a design capacity of 21 tons of yellowcake per year, it has actually operated at much lower levels,” Lewis said. “The construction of a much larger pond suggests Iran is moving toward operating the mill at its design capacity.”

About half that amount, or 9,000 kilograms of yellowcake, would be needed to produce the 25 kilograms (55 pounds) of 93 percent enriched uranium required for a weapon, according to the verification center.

History of Concealment

The satellite photos, while showing that Iran is ramping up capacity, can't pinpoint the amount of uranium being produced, the analysts said. Inspections would be needed to find out how close to production capacity Iran is at the mine.

“Given Iran's history of concealing nuclear facilities, an effective safeguards regime needs to cover all of Iran's nuclear activities from the moment the ore comes out of the earth at Bandar Abbas and elsewhere,” Lewis said.

An IAEA agreement with Iran, which allows inspection of declared nuclear sites such as Natanz and Esfahan, located about 340 kilometers south of Tehran, doesn't extend to mining operations.

Inspectors gained some access to Gchine from 2003 until 2006, when Iran stopped complying with an IAEA agreement that allowed for more stringent investigations. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ceased Iran's cooperation with the so-called Additional Protocol in 2006 in retaliation for the IAEA's referral of the dispute over Iran's nuclear work to the Security Council.

Heavy-Water Reactor

The agency has repeatedly requested more access to the mine as well as other sites involved in Iran's atomic work, most recently in a Sept. 9 report.

The Additional Protocol, created in 1997 after the discovery that Iraq and North Korea had atomic programs, would give inspectors access to places beyond Gchine, such as an incomplete heavy-water reactor in Arak, 240 kilometers south of Tehran, and plants that make centrifuges used in uranium enrichment. Inspectors would also be allowed to take water and soil samples and talk with key figures in Iran's nuclear program.

What the international community “would like to know now is where all that uranium yellowcake is going,” Andreas Persbo, executive director of the verification institute, said in an Oct. 21 interview.

Chain Reaction

Two of the four analysts who examined the satellite images and confirmed the production increase declined to be identified because they aren't authorized to speak publicly on the issue. The two satellite image companies regularly take pictures of countries such as Iran and sell the photographs to interested governments and scientists.

Inspectors don't know whether all of the mine's output is going to Esfahan for conversion, whether some is being stockpiled at the mine or whether it is being secretly transferred to an undeclared site, said Persbo. Iran hasn't reported details of the output.

At the conversion stage, yellowcake is turned into uranium hexafluoride gas. It is then transported in casks to Natanz, where centrifuges isolate the uranium-235 isotope used in a nuclear chain reaction.

Iran could produce a warhead without the IAEA's knowledge if secret facilities to convert and enrich the uranium mined at Gchine were used, according to the analysts.

Underground Facility

Iran told the IAEA about a previously secret underground enrichment plant, called Fordo, some 160 kilometers south of Tehran, in September. IAEA inspectors undertook a four-day visit to the site and will report their findings to the organization's 35-member board of governors.

Iran's ambassador to the IAEA, Aliasghar Soltanieh, when reached by telephone yesterday, wouldn't confirm that production had increased at Gchine or comment on whether the country would submit to wider inspections.

The IAEA declined to comment on the satellite photographs. U.S. diplomats also declined to comment and referred Bloomberg News to an Oct. 21 speech by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

“The International Atomic Energy Agency doesn’t have the tools or authority to carry out its mission effectively,” Clinton said in the Washington speech. “We saw this in the institution’s failure to detect Iran’s covert enrichment plant.”

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aMtzNb9WS83I&pos=9>

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News.az – Azerbaijan
05 November 2009

ElBaradei Warns Against Any Israeli Attack on Iran

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Chief Mohamed ElBaradei has warned that any Israeli attack on Iran will have dire consequences for the Middle East.

ElBaradei warned on Wednesday that such an attack would "turn the Middle East into a ball of fire".

ElBaradei said he was convinced the Iranians were prepared at one point to stop their enrichment program but that the previous US administration and the European powers missed an opportunity to end the standoff by imposing conditions on Iran that were "impossible to accept".

"They were ready to stop at an R&D (research and development) level ... that could have not have created any concern for the international community," Reuters quoted the IAEA chief as saying in New York on Wednesday.

He also called on Iran to accept the agency's draft proposal on its nuclear program.

"Iran could be the door to a stable Middle East," ElBaradei added.

"I think it's very clear if we succeed on that, it would open the way, finally, to a new era, when Iran and the US ... can work together," the IAEA chief said at the Council on Foreign Relations.

ElBaradei listed Iraq and Afghanistan as two areas where Iran could play a very constructive role.

He said there was "a unique opportunity. I see it (for) the first time ... , a genuine desire on both sides to seriously engage."

The IAEA proposal calls on Iran to send its stocks of low-enriched uranium abroad for conversion into nuclear fuel for a reactor that supplies radioisotopes for medical use.

<http://www.news.az/articles/1630>

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Xinhua News – China
5 November 2009

Iran Denounces Merkel's Comments on Iran Nuke Program

TEHRAN, Nov. 5 (Xinhua) -- Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mihmanparast on Thursday denounced German Chancellor Angela Merkel for saying nuclear Iran is "not acceptable," the official IRNA news agency reported.

Mihmanparast said what the German chancellor said at the U.S. Congress about Iran's nuclear program "was against the interests of the German people," the report said.

"Merkel raises baseless allegations against Iran, while the country is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the peaceful nature of its nuclear program has repeatedly been confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency," Mihmanparast was quoted as saying.

He criticized the German government for its "double standard and unacceptable policy" towards Iran, noting that Berlin has already equipped the Israeli army with a number of Dolphin class submarines, according to IRNA.

Addressing the U.S. Congress on Tuesday, Merkel said, "A nuclear bomb in the hands of an Iranian president who denies the Holocaust, threatens Israel and denies Israel's existence is not acceptable."

Israel, the United States and some other Western countries have been accusing Iran of secretly developing nuclear weapons under the guise of civilian programs. Israel has so far refused to rule out the military option against Iran's nuclear sites.

While Iran insists that its nuclear plan is only for peaceful purposes, it also announced that the Middle East should be free from all nuclear weapons, referring to Israel which is widely suspected to possess nuclear weapons.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-11/05/content_12394884.htm

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BBC News – U.K.
November 5, 2009

Iran: Too Divided for Nuclear Deal?

By Roger Hardy
BBC Middle East analyst

As international pressure mounts on Iran over its nuclear programme, there are signs that political divisions are hampering its ability to make a deal.

The mood music is not very upbeat.

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has said the country will not be dictated to - and there can be no dialogue if the United States is the wolf and Iran is the sheep.

The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has warned the Iranians not to use delaying tactics. They must accept the deal put forward in October, she declared, adding that it would not be changed.

Under the deal, Iran would send its low-enriched uranium to Russia for further processing. This is seen as a necessary confidence-building measure.

Iranian officials initially favoured the proposal, but then seem to have had second thoughts.

Political football

So why is Iran blowing hot and cold?

Reading the opaque currents of Iranian politics is never easy.

Those, not least in Washington, who have mistrusted Iran all along have been quick to accuse it of negotiating in bad faith.

But an alternative explanation is that the regime has been taken aback by the strength of criticism the proposed deal has aroused at home.

The issue has become a political football.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad badly needs to boost his legitimacy, after winning a second term in elections in June which many Iranians believe were rigged.

One way to do this is to claim victory over the West on the nuclear issue.

But, equally, his opponents - on both wings of the political spectrum - want to use the issue to weaken him.

Mir Hossein Mousavi, the president's principal rival in the elections and now the leader of the main opposition movement, has warned against any deal being struck at the opposition's expense.

Criticism has come from the conservative camp, too, with accusations that the president has caved in to Western pressure.

The heat of the debate seems to have rattled the regime.

Should it accept the deal, reject it or - despite Mrs Clinton's warning - try to renegotiate it?

Squabbling factions

The man who must decide is the Supreme Leader.

If he were to approve the deal, that would probably silence the squabbling factions.

The logic of this approach is clear.

At a time when the regime is under severe pressure both at home and abroad, a deal would defuse the pressure coming from the West - and stave off the prospect of further sanctions.

But the Leader's latest statement is scarcely conciliatory.

His remark about the sheep and the wolf is a quotation from the father of the Islamic revolution, the late Ayatollah Khomeini.

The clear implication is that if you converse with a wolf it will devour you.

The Supreme Leader, like the president, has been personally damaged by the crisis of legitimacy of the past five months - the most serious in the 30-year life of the Islamic Republic.

This might make him especially sensitive to the charge that he is making concessions to the West.

The outcome remains unclear. But it is possible that Iran's internal divisions are now so acute that it is unable to achieve a consensus on an issue of such magnitude.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8343990.stm

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London Guardian
November 5, 2009

Iran Tested Advanced Nuclear Warhead Design – Secret Report

Julian Borger, diplomatic editor

The UN's nuclear watchdog has asked Iran to explain evidence suggesting that Iranian scientists have experimented with an advanced nuclear warhead design, the Guardian has learned.

The very existence of the technology, known as a "two-point implosion" device, is officially secret in both the US and Britain, but according to previously unpublished documentation in a dossier compiled by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iranian scientists may have tested high-explosive components of the design. The development was today described by nuclear experts as "breathtaking" and has added urgency to the effort to find a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear crisis.

The sophisticated technology, once mastered, allows for the production of smaller and simpler warheads than older models. It reduces the diameter of a warhead and makes it easier to put a nuclear warhead on a missile.

Documentation referring to experiments testing a two-point detonation design are part of the evidence of nuclear weaponisation gathered by the IAEA and presented to Iran for its response.

The dossier, titled "Possible Military Dimensions of Iran's Nuclear Program", is drawn in part from reports submitted to it by western intelligence agencies.

The agency has in the past treated such reports with scepticism, particularly after the Iraq war. But its director general, Mohamed ElBaradei, has said the evidence of Iranian weaponisation "appears to have been derived from multiple sources over different periods of time, appears to be generally consistent, and is sufficiently comprehensive and detailed that it needs to be addressed by Iran".

Extracts from the dossier have been published previously, but it was not previously known that it included documentation on such an advanced warhead. "It is breathtaking that Iran could be working on this sort of material," said a European government adviser on nuclear issues.

James Acton, a British nuclear weapons expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said: "It's remarkable that, before perfecting step one, they are going straight to step four or five ... To start with more sophisticated designs speaks of level of technical ambition that is surprising."

Another western specialist with extensive knowledge of the Iranian programme said: "It raises the question of who supplied this to them. Did AQ Khan [a Pakistani scientist who confessed in 2004 to running a nuclear smuggling ring] have access to this, or is it another player?"

The revelation of the documents comes at a time of growing tension. Tehran has so far rejected a deal that would remove most of its enriched uranium stockpile for a year and replace it with nuclear fuel rods which would be much harder to turn into weapons. The Iranian government has also balked at negotiations, which were due to begin last week, over its continued enrichment of uranium, in defiance of UN security council resolutions.

There are fears in Washington and London that if no deal is reached to at least temporarily defuse tensions by the end of December, Israel could set in motion plans to take military action aimed at setting back the Iranian programme by force, with incalculable consequences for the Middle East.

Iran has rejected most of the IAEA material on weaponisation as forgeries, but has admitted carrying out tests on multiple high-explosive detonations synchronised to within a microsecond. Tehran has told the agency that there is a civilian application for such tests, but has so far not provided any evidence for them.

Western weapons experts say there are no such civilian applications, but the use of co-ordinated detonations in nuclear warheads is well known. They compress the fissile core, or pit, of the warhead until it reaches critical mass.

A US national intelligence estimate two years ago said that Iran had explored nuclear warhead design for several years but had probably stopped in 2003. British, French and German officials have said they believe weaponisation continued after that date and may still be continuing.

In September, a German court found a German-Iranian businessman, Mohsen Vanaki, guilty of brokering the sale of dual-use equipment with possible applications in developing nuclear weapons. The equipment included specialised high-speed cameras, of the sort used to develop implosion devices, as well as radiation detectors. According to a report by the Institute for Science and International Security, the German foreign intelligence service, the Bundesnachrichtendienst, testified at the trial that there was evidence that Iran's weapons development was continuing.

The IAEA is seeking to find out what the scientists and the institutions involved in the experiments are doing now, but has so far not been given a response. The agency's repeated requests to interview Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, whose name features heavily in the IAEA's documentation and who is widely seen as the father of the Iranian nuclear programme, have been turned down.

The agency has also asked Iran to explain evidence that a Russian weapons expert helped Iranian technicians to master synchronised high-explosive detonations.

The first implosion devices, like the "Fat Man" bomb dropped on Nagasaki on 9 August 1945, used 32 high-explosive hexagons and pentagons arrayed around a plutonium core like the panels of a football. The IAEA has a five-page document describing experimentation on such a hemispherical array of explosives.

According to a diplomat familiar with the IAEA documentation, the evidence also points to experiments with a two-point detonation system that represents "a more elegant solution" to the challenges of making a nuclear warhead, but it is much harder to achieve. It is used in conjunction with a non-spherical pit, in the shape of a rugby ball, or explosives in that shape wrapped around a spherical pit, and it works by compressing the pit from both ends. The IAEA has expressed "serious concern" about Iran's failure to give an account of the research its scientists have carried out.

Descriptions of "two-point implosion" warheads designs have occasionally appeared in the public domain (there are extensive descriptions on Wikipedia) and they were first developed by US scientists in the 1950s, but it remains an offence for American officials or even non-governmental nuclear experts with security clearance to discuss them.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/05/iran-tested-nuclear-warhead-design>

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Ha'aratz News – Jerusalem
November 5, 2009

IAEA: We Found 'Nothing To Worry About' At Secret Iran Nuke Site

By Reuters

United Nations inspectors found "nothing to be worried about" in a first look at a previously secret uranium enrichment site in Iran last month, the International Atomic Energy chief said in remarks released Thursday.

Mohammed ElBaradei also told the New York Times that he was examining possible compromises to unblock a draft nuclear cooperation deal between Iran and three major powers that has floundered over Iranian objections.

The nuclear site, which Iran revealed in September three years after diplomats said Western spies first detected it, added to Western fears of covert Iranian efforts to develop atom bombs. Iran says it is enriching uranium only for electricity.

ElBaradei was quoted in a New York Times interview as saying his inspectors' initial findings at the fortified site beneath a desert mountain near the Shi'ite holy city of Qom were "nothing to be worried about."

"The idea was to use it as a bunker under the mountain to protect things," ElBaradei, alluding to Tehran's references to the site as a fallback for its nuclear program in case its larger Natanz enrichment plant were bombed by a foe like Israel.

"It's a hole in a mountain," he said.

The IAEA has declined to comment on whether the inspectors came across anything surprising or were able to obtain all the documentation and on-site access they had wanted at the remote spot about 160 km (100 miles) south of Tehran.

Details are expected to be included in the next IAEA report on Iran's disputed nuclear activity due in mid-November.

The inspectors' goal was to compare engineering designs to be provided by Iran with the actual look of the facility, interview scientists and other employees, and take soil samples to check for any traces of activity oriented to making bombs.

Western diplomats and analysts say the site's capacity appears too small to fuel a nuclear power station but enough to yield fissile material for one or two nuclear warheads a year.

The Islamic Republic revealed the plant's existence to the Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog on Sept. 21. It said the site, which remains under construction, would enrich uranium only to the low 5 percent purity suitable for power plant fuel.

Enrichment to the 90 percent threshold provides the fissile material that detonates nuclear weapons.

After talks with Iran and three world powers, ElBaradei drafted a plan for Iran to transfer most of its low-enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and France to turn it into fuel for a Tehran reactor that makes isotopes for cancer treatment.

Russia, France and the United States, which would help modernize the reactor's safety equipment and instrumentation under the deal, see it as a way to reduce Iran's LEU stockpile below the threshold needed to produce material for a bomb.

But since the Oct. 19-21 talks, Iran has made clear it is loath to ship its own LEU abroad because of its strategic value, and would prefer buying the reactor fuel it needs from foreign suppliers. Iran has called for more talks.

Western diplomats say the three powers do not want more talks and that Iran's demands are a non-starter as they would do nothing to remove the risk of nuclear proliferation in Iran.

ElBaradei was quoted by the New York Times as saying the problem boiled down to "total distrust on the part of Iran ..."

"The issue is timing, whether the uranium goes out and then some time later they get the fuel, as we agreed [tentatively] in Geneva, or whether it only goes at the same time as the fuel is delivered," he said.

"There are a lot of ideas. One is to send [Iran's uranium] to a third country, which could be a friendly country to Iran, and it stays there. Park it in another state ...[for] something like a year..., then ... bring in the fuel. The issue is to get it out, and so create the time and space to start building trust."

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1126198.html>

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Washington Post
November 6, 2009

Iran Holding up Nuclear Deal with Demand for Reactor Fuel, Diplomat says

By Glenn Kessler
Washington Post Staff Writer

Iran is demanding full delivery of reactor fuel before it gives up its stash of low-enriched uranium and has balked at further efforts to hold international talks on its nuclear program, according to a senior European diplomat.

The diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitive diplomacy involved, said prospects for a breakthrough with Iran have narrowed dramatically since a high-level meeting in Geneva on Oct. 1, when Iran tentatively approved a deal to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium and agreed to hold another set of talks by the end of October. Instead, the reactor deal appears to be falling apart, and there are no prospects for talks before the governing body of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meets this month to consider whether Iran violated international obligations by building a nuclear facility near the city of Qom.

Such a finding would probably result in yet another referral to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions, the diplomat said.

The diplomat said he thought the breakdown in the discussions has little to do with the nuclear issue and instead is the result of a tense struggle within the Iranian political system. The issue has "paralyzed the decision-making process in Tehran," he said. "It is a battle over who is tougher or who is more anti-American, and we are in a situation so ridiculous that [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad is in the middle."

Ahmadinejad -- considered a hard-liner in the West -- promoted the idea of seeking an agreement with the West to acquire new reactor fuel for a medical research facility that helps detect and treat diseases. Major powers offered to convert a substantial portion of Iran's low-enriched uranium into the necessary reactor fuel at facilities in Russia and France. But according to the diplomat, Iran then said it would not ship its uranium out of the country until it received upfront all of the reactor fuel it needs for the facility. There is discussion of perhaps a third country holding Iran's stock under IAEA supervision, the diplomat said, but he expressed pessimism that the impasse could be broken.

"We keep using the Russians to pass tough messages every day, saying: 'This is a good deal. Take it,' " he said.

During the Geneva talks, which started with no official agenda, Iranian diplomats refused to discuss Tehran's uranium-enrichment program, though Western powers raised the issue, the diplomat said. Diplomats had hoped that Iran would begin to engage on its nuclear ambitions at the planned follow-up meeting, but it has refused to agree to any agenda that lists the nuclear program, he said.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/05/AR2009110504439_pf.html

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Reuters of India
November 6, 2009

Iran Cleric says Conditions Unacceptable on Nuclear Fuel

By Parisa Hafezi

TEHRAN (Reuters) - The U.N. nuclear watchdog is legally obliged to provide Iran with nuclear fuel for its research reactor without setting any conditions, a hardline Iranian cleric told worshippers on Friday.

European Union leaders have called on Iran to accept a U.N.-drafted nuclear proposal under which it would send most of its low-enriched uranium abroad by the end of the year for further enrichment to turn it into fuel for a medical reactor in Tehran.

Ahmad Khatami, a member of a powerful clerical body that can appoint or dismiss Iran's supreme leader, said in a sermon broadcast on state radio that Iran was prepared to produce fuel for its Tehran reactor if world powers insisted on the deal.

"The International Atomic Energy Agency is legally obliged to provide fuel ... if you want to play games with us then I can assure you that we will produce it by ourselves," Khatami told worshippers at Tehran University. "The Iranian nation is wise and will not be deceived by the nuclear deal."

Iran says talks are needed on the nuclear deal and that Tehran wants to import atomic fuel rather than send its own uranium abroad for processing.

The West accuses Iran of covertly trying to build a nuclear bomb. Tehran says its nuclear programme is peaceful, aimed at generating electricity to meet its booming domestic demand.

"Why should we send our low enriched uranium abroad? ... who can guarantee that you will then provide us with the needed fuel?" said Khatami.

The United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China have tried for years to persuade Iran to suspend uranium enrichment activities in return for economic and political incentives.

NO RETREAT

Tehran has so far refused to halt its enrichment.

Khatami said Iran had no intention of yielding to the West's pressure over its nuclear programme.

"No one has traded over the Iranian nation's legitimate nuclear right... ," said the cleric in the sermon broadcast live on state radio.

The West's priority is to reduce Iran's LEU stockpile to prevent any danger that the Islamic Republic might turn it into the highly enriched uranium needed for a nuclear bomb.

The Guardian newspaper in its Friday edition said the IAEA has asked Iran to explain evidence suggesting the Islamic Republic's scientists have experimented with an advanced nuclear warhead design.

U.S. President Barack Obama urged Tehran on Wednesday to make a concession over its nuclear programme, adding that he was ready to deal directly with Iran, something his predecessor largely rejected.

Khatami ruled out talks with Iran's arch enemy, the United States, that broke ties with the Islamic state shortly after the 1979 Islamic revolution.

"As long as the American leaders have an arrogant mentality, the great Iranian nation will not engage in the evil talks with them," said Khatami, echoing Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's remarks who said on Tuesday that Iran would not be deceived into reconciliation with Washington.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-43747920091106?sp=true>

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
6 November 2009

Moscow Hopes to Begin Final Round of Arms Talks on Nov. 9

MOSCOW, November 6 (RIA Novosti) - Moscow hopes November 9 will see the start of the concluding round of U.S.-Russian arms reduction talks, official Foreign Ministry spokesman Andrei Nesterenko said on Friday.

"Russian-American talks on [a new] strategic arms reduction treaty have been almost continuous," Nesterenko said. "The ninth round begins in Geneva on Monday. We hope it will be the final one and the new treaty will be coordinated by December 5."

START I (the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), the basis for Russian-U.S. strategic nuclear disarmament, is valid until December 5. The two countries' presidents have expressed hope that a new pact will be ready before it expires.

The outlines of the new pact were agreed during Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama's summit in Moscow in July and include cutting both countries' nuclear arsenals to 1,500-1,675 operational warheads and delivery vehicles to 500-1,000.

Senior Russian officials said last week the previous round of talks had yielded major progress.

Nesterenko said the treaty should reflect a link between strategic, offensive and defensive arms in the absence of the bilateral Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty that put limits on missile systems.

He also said control over the implementation of the future treaty should be less costly and complicated.

Talks on the START, a key Cold War-era arms control pact, are seen as part of the two countries' efforts to "reset" ties strained over a host of issues under the previous U.S. administration.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091106/156734730.html>

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Seattle Pilot
November 6, 2009

Russian FM Optimistic on Arms Control Treaty Deal

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW -- A spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry has voiced hope that Moscow and Washington will be able to negotiate a successor to a Cold War-era arms control treaty that expires next month.

Andrei Nesterenko said Friday that Moscow hopes the next round of U.S.-Russian arms control talks produce a deal before the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expires on Dec. 5.

Russian and U.S. diplomats are set to launch another round of negotiations in Geneva on Monday.

Nesterenko told a briefing that last week's visit to Moscow by U.S. National Security Adviser James Jones helped bring the countries' positions closer.

Talks on a successor to START I have been a major part of efforts to overcome a strain in U.S.-Russian ties.

http://www.seattlepi.com/national/1103ap_eu_russia_us.html

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Chosun Ilbo
November 4, 2009

N.Korea, U.S. 'to Hold 2 Rounds of Talks'

North Korea and the United States have agreed to hold two official meetings before North Korea returns to multilateral talks, U.S. Foreign Policy magazine reported Tuesday. The agreement came in a meeting between Sung Kim, the U.S. special envoy to the six party talks, and Ri Gun, director general of the North American affairs bureau of North Korea's Foreign Ministry, it said quoting a source.

The U.S. named three conditions, namely holding two formal bilateral meetings before North Korea returns to multilateral talks, and allowing U.S. special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth to meet with North Korea's Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju when he visits Pyongyang. The third condition was "to abide by its previous commitments, namely the September 19, 2005 declaration in which the North Koreans committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards."

North Korea agreed to hold two formal meetings, backing down from its original position to do so only if the first round went well. It did not object to Bosworth meeting Kang instead of a lower-ranking official, but demurred on the third condition. Instead it "wanted to resume talks based on the idea of 'denuclearization of the Korean peninsula,' a nuanced but important distinction," the magazine said.

That way, the North adhered to the position that South Korea too must submit to inspections, Foreign Policy added.

http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2009/11/04/2009110400767.html

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Korea Herald
November 5, 2009

'N.K. Accepts U.S. Conditions for Talks'

By Kim So-hyun

The United States is expected to respond to North Korea's call for bilateral talks soon amid growing impatience in Pyongyang, which recently made announcements about progress in its nuclear arms program.

North Korea agreed to a U.S. proposal last week to have two formal bilateral meetings before returning to a multilateral forum, according to a U.S. magazine on global affairs, taking a step back from its previous position to return to the six-nation talks only if talks with Washington went well.

U.S. magazine Foreign Policy reported that last week's behind-the-scenes meetings between Sung Kim, the U.S. State Department's special envoy to six-party talks, and Ri Gun, North Korea's deputy nuclear envoy, reaped "substantial progress," with the North agreeing to two of the three conditions presented by the United States.

Citing an official with access to information on the negotiations, FP said that the North also agreed to allow U.S. special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth, who has been invited repeatedly to Pyongyang, to meet with its first vice foreign minister Kang Sok-ju.

"Bosworth's visit would be seen as a failure unless some demonstrable progress was made and it is widely believed that only top officials in Kim Jong-il's regime have real negotiating authority," the magazine said.

"By meeting with Kang, Bosworth could leapfrog Ri and his boss, vice minister of foreign affairs Kim Kye-gwan."

The North, however, demurred on the third condition that it abide by its Sept. 19, 2005 declaration, in which it committed to "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and returning, at an early date, to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to IAEA safeguards," Foreign Policy said.

North Korea insists on the idea of denuclearization not just on its side but across the Korean Peninsula, as referred to in previous U.S.-DPRK joint documents.

The United States is likely to decide soon whether to hold high-level talks in Pyongyang, South Korean chief nuclear negotiator Wi Sung-lac said yesterday.

"What I heard most recently (about U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks) is that Washington was set to determine its position soon because it has been quite some time since the North made the invitation," Wi said.

North Korea has pressed the United States to quickly respond to its invitation of Bosworth, initially made in early August.

The North said through its state media on Tuesday that it had completed reprocessing 8,000 spent fuel rods to extract weapons-grade plutonium, a day after threatening to "go its own way" if the United States remained silent.

Wi played down the North's announcement as "it wasn't entirely unexpected considering what it said in September" -- that the fuel rods were in the final stage of reprocessing.

"It is too early to judge on the impact (of the North's statement)," he said.

"But it is unlikely to be helpful for the North's bilateral talks with the United States."

Wi is scheduled to travel to Washington today to meet with U.S. officials including Bosworth and Sung Kim.

"I plan to discuss with my usual counterparts in the White House, U.S. State Department and the Pentagon the pending U.S.-North Korea talks, while focusing on preparations for the South Korea-U.S. summit this month," Wi said.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/11/05/200911050011.asp

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RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency
6 November 2009

Moscow Urges Calm Over North Korea's Plutonium Weaponizing

MOSCOW, November 6 (RIA Novosti) - North Korea's weaponizing of plutonium at its Yongbyon reactor should not be 'dramatized,' a spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry said on Friday.

Pyongyang said on November 3 that it had "successfully completed the reprocessing of 8,000 spent fuel rods" by late August and seen "remarkable achievements in weaponizing extracted plutonium to strengthen North Korea's nuclear deterrence."

"Such steps as the extraction and weaponization of plutonium from spent fuel rods at the Yongbyon reactor can hardly be viewed as favorable for the formation of an atmosphere to resume talks," Andrei Nesterenko said.

"However, we would like to call on everyone not to dramatize this, as such steps bring nothing new in principal to the current situation," he added.

North Korea has repeatedly stated recently that it was prepared to return to six-party talks on its nuclear program in exchange for economic and diplomatic incentives.

The country said on Monday it wants to negotiate first with the U.S. to repair hostile relations before resuming talks with the other parties to the long-running denuclearization talks.

Nesterenko also said he was counting on bilateral talks between Washington and Pyongyang, saying that "We hope our colleagues from the United States and North Korea will be able to reach an agreement in a relatively short period of time."

North Korea has invited Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. special envoy to Pyongyang, to visit. Washington has yet to officially accept the invitation, but has said bilateral contacts would be an important step towards resuming six-nation talks.

The UN banned imports and exports of nuclear material and all weapons except small arms to and from North Korea following a nuclear test on May 25, after which Pyongyang threatened to build up its nuclear arsenal to counter what it calls hostile U.S. policies.

<http://en.rian.ru/russia/20091106/156736218.html>

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Global Security Newswire
Nov. 6, 2009

U.S. Makes Plans to Secure North Korean WMD

The U.S. military would take the lead in destroying or safeguarding North Korean weapons of mass destruction should the isolated Asian state fall into chaos, *Defense News* reported yesterday (see *GSN*, Oct. 19).

South Korea and the United States have an understanding that U.S. forces on the peninsula would manage that effort even though Seoul is set to regain operational wartime control over its forces from Washington in 2012.

The weapons of mass destruction protocol is a component of the bilateral Operational Plan 5029, which is intended to prepare the allies to deal with the potential collapse of the government in Pyongyang.

"Either" U.S. or South Korean forces would carry out security operations at nuclear and weapons of mass destruction complexes in the North, according to one South Korean military commander.

"Both troops will conduct contingency operations jointly or independently in accordance with emerging situations," the commander said. "The U.S. military will take charge of WMD elimination works if needed."

North Korea has active nuclear-weapon and missile programs. It has also been said to possess up to 5,000 metric tons of chemical warfare materials and to have a continuing biological-weapon effort.

South Korean defense researcher Cha Du-hyeogn said it was better that U.S. forces spearhead the removal of weapons of mass destruction because of their superior surveillance technology and greater experience with such armaments.

"Some opponents say the U.S. should not be involved in North Korean contingency situations because that's an issue of South and North Korea concern," Cha said. "That's wrong. The North Korean nuclear and WMD issue has already become a regional or international problem beyond that of the Korean Peninsula."

While U.S. forces could be used to deal with the North's nuclear weapons, the South Korean military could head up destruction of Pyongyang's biological and chemical weapons stockpiles that could be housed in roughly 100 facilities.

"A force of considerable size could be required to secure, search and resolve these sites, plus any other discovered, and move the materials to friendly locations where elimination could be accomplished, especially as long as hostile North Korean forces are controlling or around those sites," stated RAND Corp. defense analyst Bruce Bennett.

"It may take even a large force a very long time to deal with all of these locations. Most of this force would, of necessity, be" South Korean, he said.

Bennett added that it would be important to round up North Korea's nuclear weapons scientists to prevent them from going to work for terrorist organizations or rogue nations (Jung Sung-ki, *Defense News*, Nov. 5).

http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org/gsn/nw_20091106_5464.php

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Times of India
5 NOVEMBER 2009

India Worried about Pak N-Control

TNN

NEW DELHI: With the Taliban unleashing a series of attacks on Pakistan's defence installations, including a military base linked to its strategic programme, there is growing worry about Islamabad's ability to safeguard its nuclear arsenal.

"The internal security situation in Pakistan seems to be deteriorating every day. We really don't know for how long and how far its establishment would be able to adequately safeguard its strategic assets," minister of state for defence M M Pallam Raju said on Wednesday.

Asked about the possibility of Pakistani nuclear weapons or even enriched uranium falling into Taliban's hands, the minister said, "I hope they (Pakistan) are taking adequate measures and we hope that such an incident will not happen," he added.

The ongoing turmoil in Pakistan, coupled with its huge stockpile of enriched uranium and the long-standing `sympathetic' links forged by some elements of the country's security establishment with jihadi outfits, could well spell danger for the world at large.

Jihadi outfits armed with `dirty bombs' -- basically radiological dispersal devices combining radioactive material with suitable explosives -- are after all what `nightmare scenarios' are often made up of.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-worried-about-Pak-N-control/articleshow/5197191.cms>

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Wall Street Journal
November 5, 2009

EI Baradei Ends Term With Goals 'In Tatters'

By Joe Lauria

NEW YORK -- The departing director of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog agency declared Wednesday that efforts to curb nuclear proliferation were in "tatters," but he held out hope that current talks over Iran's nuclear program could open "a new era" between the West and Tehran.

Mohamed ElBaradei, who leaves Dec. 1 after 12 years as director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told the Council on Foreign Relations that 50 years of mistrust threatens the proposed deal for Iran to ship most of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France for processing into medical isotopes.

Iran has balked over issues of timing and amounts to be shipped, but talks could still succeed, he asserted. "If I can do that by the end of the month, I'd leave as a very happy man," he said.

The Egyptian diplomat said the IAEA still has no concrete proof that Iran has an ongoing nuclear-weapons program. He praised the Obama administration for opening a dialogue with Iran without preconditions.

Mr. ElBaradei said military action against Iran would solve nothing, since Tehran would engage in a crash program and "you cannot bomb knowledge." If Iran was attacked, "Every Iranian, even in Los Angeles" would support the nuclear program, he asserted, as would its allies.

Arab nations were "not comfortable reading that Israel has 200 warheads and it wants to bomb a country just for having the technology," he said.

Mr. ElBaradei said the world had fared poorly in its nonproliferation efforts. "We have not done well over the past 25 years," he said. "If you look at our international security system, it is in tatters." He said there was more danger now that nuclear weapons would be used than during the Cold War, especially if they get into terrorists' hands.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB125738716199429981.html>

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Knoxville News Sentinel
5 November 2009

Trident Warheads Delivered to U.S. Navy

By Frank Munger

OAK RIDGE - After years of effort, the government confirmed this week that the first batch of refurbished W76 (Trident) warheads has been delivered to the U.S. Navy.

The Y-12 nuclear weapons plant in Oak Ridge played a significant role in refurbishing the old warheads for submarine-based Trident missiles, and the life-extension program is expected to continue for several years.

The National Nuclear Security Administration in February announced that the first rehabbed warhead had been "accepted" into the nuclear stockpile and later indicated that the delivery to the Navy would take place in the fall, after multiple warheads were ready for shipment.

In response to questions, Damien LaVera, a spokesman for the NNSA in Washington, said, "I can now confirm that the first refurbished W76s were delivered to the Navy in August." Information on the number of warheads was not available.

The Trident missile system is a mainstay in U.S. nuclear defense, and efforts to update and refurbish the aging warheads have been beset with problems. Those problems included a lengthy delay in producing a classified material known as "Fogbank" at Y-12.

Y-12 specializes in the second stage of nuclear warheads. The Oak Ridge plant completed its components for the rehabbed W76 in the summer of 2008 and shipped them to the government's Pantex Plant near Amarillo, Texas, where the full warheads are assembled.

<http://www.knoxnews.com/news/2009/nov/05/trident-warheads-delivered-to-us-navy/>

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Knoxville News Sentinel
5 November 2009

Exporting HEU for Nuke Smuggling Exercise

Frank Munger's

ATOMIC CITY UNDERGROUND

The National Nuclear Security Administration and the Y-12 nuclear weapons plant have been busy this summer obtaining export licenses from the NRC and apparently shipping small quantities of highly enriched uranium (92.95 percent U-235) around the world for some sort of nuclear smuggling exercise.

Pieces of the applications and correspondence are publicly viewable at the NRC's online document system, but the NNSA isn't saying much beyond what's there. I asked about the export requests a couple of months ago, and this week I received a much-belated response from Steven Wyatt, a federal spokesman at Y-12:

"Y-12 is supplying small quantities of enriched uranium to certain foreign and domestic laboratories in support of the Nuclear Smuggling International Technical Working Group. The samples will be distributed to support an

analytical exercise associated with nuclear forensics analysis. No other information regarding these shipments is available for public release other than what is already contained on the NRC export licenses required for these shipments."

One piece of correspondence covering several applications indicated that the HEU samples were sent to Australia, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, and the United Kingdom. "The uranium will be used exclusively for the sample analysis exercise under a contract between each government and DOE," the letter said.

Another letter from Becky Eddy of the NNSA office at Y-12 said each foreign lab was to get a maximum of 14 grams of uranium, with those shipments to be executed by early September. Other information indicated that the material would be destroyed during the analytical exercise.

Wyatt declined to comment on whether the exercise has already taken place or whether it's still in the planning.

http://blogs.knoxnews.com/munger/2009/11/exporting_heu_for_nuke_smuggli.html

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Financial Times – U.K.

November 4, 2009

OPINION

The US must Cajole Iran into a Nuclear Deal

By Robert Litwak

The Obama administration has called the negotiations to curb Iran's nuclear capabilities a critical test of the Tehran regime's intentions. The dilemma is that through its mastery of uranium enrichment, Iran has achieved a breakout option: centrifuges ostensibly intended to produce low-enriched uranium for civil use can be kept spinning to yield high-enriched uranium for bomb-making. Negotiations can narrow, but not eliminate that inherent ambiguity, since any country that crosses that key technological threshold is a "virtual" nuclear-weapons state, according to International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei.

For the Tehran regime, a hedge has political utility as a source of leverage with its regional neighbours and as a complicating factor in the strategic calculations of its adversaries. For the Obama administration, the question is how much ambiguity it is prepared to live with.

Iran's nuclear programme is determined and incremental. But it is not a crash programme to get a weapon as quickly as possible. Iran is not under urgent pressure to weaponise. Indeed, overt development of nuclear weapons would trigger an adverse regional reaction, potentially leading to a cascade of proliferation as Saudi Arabia and others reconsider their nuclear intentions. Moreover, the end of Iran's nuclear ambiguity would strip Russia and China of the fig leaf they have used to block meaningful punitive measures in the UN Security Council. Under these circumstances, Iran may well opt for a nuclear hedge strategy indefinitely.

In April 2003, the US-led invasion of Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein set an important precedent – coercive non-proliferation through a change of regime. Eight months later, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's surprise decision to terminate his country's weapons of mass destruction programmes pointed to an alternative model – nonproliferation through a change within a regime. Although the Bush administration claimed the breakthrough as a dividend of the Iraq war, the crux of the deal was a tacit, but clear, security assurance that the US would eschew regime change as an objective if Libya agreed to transparent WMD disarmament.

With Iran, the Bush administration was caught between the Iraq and Libya precedents. It could not replicate the Iraq model and would not offer the security assurance that was central to Mr Gaddafi's turnaround. President George W. Bush never resolved that core contradiction: whether the US objective was to change the Iranian regime or to change its conduct.

President Barack Obama inherited a hard case with no good option. A military strike on Iran's nuclear infrastructure would set back, but not end, the nuclear programme. In Iran, military action would probably be viewed as the initiation of a preventative war to topple the regime – and the Iranians would retaliate accordingly against US interests. Domestically, the hardline regime, on the defensive since the fraudulent June elections, would politically benefit from the rally-round-the-flag effect of foreign military intervention.

The alternative to the military option is a strategy of containment and deterrence. The Obama administration's resolution of the ambiguity in American policy – clarifying that the US objective is behaviour change – is the

prerequisite for reducing Iran's nuclear ambiguity. Bringing Iran back into compliance with its Non-Proliferation Treaty commitments requires transparency – most notably, with respect to suspect undeclared sites, such as the secret uranium enrichment facility near Qom recently revealed by President Obama. Increased transparency and reduced ambiguity would hopefully prevent or at least provide timely warning of an Iranian breakout.

Iran now faces a structured choice between the tangible benefits of behaviour change and the penalties for non-compliance. Creating meaningful multilateral pressure on Iran to comply will require co-operation from Russia, which must decide whether its occasionally rancorous differences with the US trump its interest in blocking the rise of another nuclear state on its periphery.

The other essential element of this containment strategy is the reassurance of America's regional allies. Preventing those states from either acquiring independent nuclear capabilities to counter Iran or reaching some accommodation with a regionally-ascendant Tehran is contingent on Washington's ability to provide reassurance that is both militarily and politically credible.

The ongoing nuclear crisis is playing out against the backdrop of political turmoil in Iran, with fresh opposition demonstrations taking place on Wednesday. But with regime change not an immediate prospect, the US cannot wait for a potentially long-term political process to play out there. A containment strategy would decouple the nuclear issue from the question of regime change and rely on internal forces as the agent of societal change.

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a293e640-c930-11de-b551-00144feabdc0.html>

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Korea Herald – South Korea

EDITORIAL

5 November 2009

Reading N.K. Mind

Some progress appears to have been made toward bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea.

Although early reports said that the meeting between Ri Gun, North Korea's top negotiator at the six-party talks, and Sung Kim, the U.S. State Department's special envoy to the talks, in the United States last week were not fruitful, a Foreign Policy report citing U.S. government officials said that Washington had presented a three-point proposal to the North.

The two sides are reported to have agreed to hold two bilateral meetings before returning to the six-party talks. This reflects the U.S. desire to limit the goal of the bilateral talks to bringing the communist state to the multilateral forum. It also represents a North Korean retreat from its previous position that it would return to multilateral talks only if the bilateral talks are successful.

Although U.S. Ambassador Stephen Bosworth has not officially accepted Pyongyang's invitations to visit the North, the report said that the two sides agreed that Bosworth would be able to meet with Kang Sok-ju, North Korea's first vice foreign minister. Kang is responsible for Pyongyang's diplomatic affairs, including the nuclear issue. The proposed meeting would be a high-level one that could produce tangible results.

The sticking point in the U.S. proposal is Washington's demand that North Korea reiterate its commitment to denuclearize and to return to the Non-proliferation Treaty and to IAEA safeguards. North Korea insists on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula - meaning South and North Korea - while Washington wants Pyongyang to recommit to its Sept. 19, 2005 agreement, which spells out terms for North Korean denuclearization. There are no nuclear weapons in South Korea.

On Tuesday, Pyongyang said it had completed the reprocessing of 8,000 fuel rods by the end of August at its Yongbyon nuclear complex. The official Korean Central News Agency also said, "Noticeable successes have been made in making the extracted plutonium weapons-grade for the purpose of bolstering up the nuclear deterrent."

By announcing that it has made progress on the weaponization of plutonium, Pyongyang aims to create a sense of urgency on meeting directly with Washington. Since more progress in weaponization will presumably be made with time, Pyongyang is in fact goading the United States to quickly start the bilateral talks.

A day earlier, North Korea's foreign ministry pressed Washington to agree to direct talks. "If the U.S. is not ready to sit at a negotiating table with the DPRK, it will go its own way," the ministry said. It did not elaborate what "its own way" meant.

After conducting a second nuclear test in May and launching several missiles in succession, the North suddenly changed its tactics. In August, it invited Bosworth to Pyongyang and in early October, North Korean leader Kim Jong-il told the visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao that his country was ready to return to multilateral talks, including the six-party negotiations, but only after holding bilateral talks with the United States to improve hostile relations between the two countries.

The eagerness of the North Koreans to meet with the United States and the sense of urgency it is fomenting are reflective of how desperately Pyongyang needs international assistance. The international sanctions imposed by the U.N. are having an impact, further isolating the already destitute country.

Bilateral talks between Pyongyang and Washington may come soon. North Korea has desired such talks for quite some time and it remains to be seen what will result from the talks. The government in Seoul, in the meantime, must prepare for all eventualities.

http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/NEWKHSITE/data/html_dir/2009/11/05/200911050049.asp

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Washington Post
OPINION
November 6, 2009
GLOBALIST

Bunkers or Breakthrough?

By ROGER COHEN

NEW YORK — In his last month as head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei finds himself at the explosive crux of the world's nuclear politics, ferrying messages between the Obama administration and Tehran. "They are talking through me," he says.

Talking is something, even through a mediator, given all the poisonous U.S.-Iranian history, but time is short. President Obama's Iran outreach is on the line in the days before ElBaradei departs on Nov. 30. It's critical that Obama succeed or a futile confrontation-sanctions scenario will be locked in. Any vestigial hopes for a more peaceful Middle East will recede.

Protesters, Iran's brave campaigners for a freer and more open country, are chanting, "Obama, Obama — either you're with them or you're with us." That must hurt in the Oval Office. The window is narrowing for the president to show that outreach can normalize the psychotic U.S.-Iranian relationship where confrontation only comforts it. I still believe normalization is the last best hope for Iranian reform.

So Obama is right to persist, right to favor the head over the heart. But he needs an interlocutor. And right now he's got a foreign-policy vacuum in Tehran.

Last month, it seemed there was a deal: Iran ships out most of its known low-enriched uranium — about 1,200 kilograms — and eventually gets fuel rods for a reactor producing medical isotopes. The agreement buys time. It slows the noisy, fast-ticking Israeli clocks by removing the stuff Iran could use to make a bomb.

But, as ElBaradei told me in an interview, "there's total distrust on the part of Iran." This has now expressed itself in a demand for "guarantees." Iran has not balked by demanding that its uranium be sent out in phases — as some reports suggested — but by seeking cast-iron assurances that the fuel will come back.

"Whether it's one shipment is not the issue," ElBaradei said. "The issue is timing: whether the uranium goes out and then some time later they get the fuel, as was agreed in Geneva, or whether it only goes at the same time as the fuel is delivered." He added: "If it is simultaneous it would not defuse the crisis, and the whole idea is to defuse the crisis."

Compromise ideas are being explored. ElBaradei has talked to Obama, who is driving Iran policy, several times. He has talked to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who, weakened by the disputed June 12 election, has emerged as a proponent of what would be an immensely popular opening to America.

"There are a lot of ideas," ElBaradei told me. "One is to send the material" — Iran's uranium — "to a third country, which could be a friendly country to Iran, and it stays there. Park it in another state, then later bring in the fuel. The issue is to get it out, and so create the time and space to start building trust."

It's essential to secure "something like a year" between the uranium's exit and the fuel's arrival. This would open the way for "direct engagement between Iran and the U.S. There is no other way. Six-party talks can continue but the heavy lifting can only be done by the U.S."

ElBaradei's message to Tehran: "This is an opportunity I have not seen before and it will not happen again." His message to Washington: "Be patient."

The problem is the disarray in Tehran. It is payback time for Ahmadinejad. Everyone he's slighted — like Ali Larijani, the powerful speaker of the Majlis — is gunning for him. The supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, went along with the outline of the Geneva deal but has begun to equivocate.

The Islamic Republic needs to move on. It has sullied and weakened itself in recent months. It needs to put an end to the paralyzing behind-the-scenes fight over who would claim credit for any rapprochement with America. It must recognize, as ElBaradei put it, that "Obama is really sticking his neck out."

Diplomacy is most useful between enemies. There is no alternative. ElBaradei said: "Sanctions are an expression of frustration," adding that "in the long run they will not resolve the issue." That's right.

A stick exists. It is the volatile state of post-June-12 Iranian society. Protest was not quashed but went underground. Every now and then it flares; that will not stop. Obama's outreach has unsettled Iran, produced this new fluidity.

Now it's overwhelmingly in Iran's interest, and America's, to do the deal. For Iran, it's a way out of debilitating isolation; for Washington it's a first step in Obama's bold quest for a new Middle Eastern order.

"I hope Iran will not miss this opportunity and will take a very small risk for peace. Otherwise everybody will lose." ElBaradei said.

He also said inspectors had found "nothing to be worried about" in the underground facility at Qum built in secret by Iran. "The idea was to use it as a bunker under the mountain to protect things. It's a hole in a mountain."

Bunkers or breakthrough? A Nobel laureate who has the trust of both sides will be gone in a few weeks. Use him or lose.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/06/opinion/06iht-edcohen.html>

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Tehran Gains Time

IT'S BEEN five weeks since the Obama administration announced that Iran had agreed to ship most of its enriched uranium out of the country in exchange for fuel rods for a research reactor -- a deal that promised to delay Tehran's nuclear program by a year or so. But there have been no shipments; instead, Iran rejected the technical terms proposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency. It is trying to change the deal in a way that would remove the slight benefit it offered to the West. And it is continuing its refusal even to discuss the central demand of the U.N. Security Council, which is that it suspend uranium enrichment.

So far there has been no visible reaction to Tehran's stance from the Obama administration, other than statements insisting that Iran go through with the uranium swap as originally agreed. The administration appears to be hoping that what officials believe is a debate inside the regime will be won by proponents of a rapprochement with the West. They also want to ensure that, if there is a breakdown in the negotiations, Iran is blamed by all concerned -- including Russia and China, whose support would be needed for new U.N. sanctions.

These calculations are sensible enough. Yet, as a practical matter, they facilitate what many experts believe is Iran's underlying strategy. That is to prolong talks with the United States and its allies for as long as possible, forestalling further sanctions even as the Revolutionary Guard continues its crackdown on the opposition "green movement." As opposition activists have been warning, the appearance of conducting talks with the United States helps the regime consolidate its shaky authority. And each day Iran's known centrifuges produce another six pounds of enriched uranium.

The Obama administration and European governments have set the end of the year as a deadline for the transfer of the uranium out of Iran and for progress in the overall negotiations. But the administration must consider whether it makes sense to grant the regime two more months of grace. On Tuesday, after all, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei publicly rejected the overtures he said he had received from President Obama, declaring that negotiating with the United States was "naive and perverted." On Wednesday, the opposition protesters chanted: "Obama, Obama -- either you're with them, or with us." Sooner rather than later, Mr. Obama ought to respond to those messages.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/05/AR2009110504523.html>

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