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New York Times  
December 29, 2005

## **New Twist In Iran On Plan For Nuclear Fuel**

By Richard Bernstein and David E. Sanger

BERLIN, Dec. 28 - In what may herald a sharp reversal of previous statements, a senior Iranian official said Wednesday that Iran would "seriously and enthusiastically" study a Russian proposal aimed at breaking the deadlock on efforts to block Iran from enriching nuclear fuel.

The official, Javad Vaeedi, deputy head of the Supreme National Security Council, was referring to a proposal made by Russia several weeks ago under which Iranian-produced uranium gas would be processed into fuel in Russia and returned to Iran.

The circuitous route would ensure that Iran would be able to produce fuel only for nuclear power, and could not enrich the uranium into a form that could be used in weapons. It would also slow Iran's ability to obtain enrichment technology.

Last week in Vienna, Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, the leader of the delegation that has been conducting talks with British, German and French negotiators, rejected the same proposal, saying that Iran had told the Europeans to "act on the proposition that enrichment will be conducted inside" Iran, and that any other option was "unacceptable" and "an insult."

It is difficult to ascertain Iraq's true position on the issue. There have been some hints of a struggle within the new government over nuclear policy, American and European officials say, but a senior American official said last week, "We're not clear who is calling the shots."

Iran has insisted on many occasions that it has the right to develop the technology to produce nuclear fuel on its own territory. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has responded that the issue is not one of rights under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which Iran has signed, but rather a question of whether Iran can be trusted, after repeatedly deceiving the International Atomic Energy Agency about its facilities and abilities.

Iran claims that its nuclear program, parts of which it carried out clandestinely for 18 years before it was discovered by United Nations inspectors, is only to generate power, but the United States and Europe believe the true goal is to develop nuclear weapons.

Mr. Vaeedi's statement indicating a more welcoming attitude toward the Russian proposal was reported Wednesday by the Iranian Student News Service, which has been used in the past to make policy declarations to the world.

One interpretation is that Iran, faced with the possibility that the Europeans will halt the talks once and for all and refer Iran's violations of the nonproliferation accord to the United Nations Security Council for a vote on sanctions, has decided that the Russian proposal is an acceptable compromise.

But it seemed equally likely that Iran was not so much making a policy change as it was continuing the jockeying for international support that has been taking place over the past several months. The United States and the three European nations have been simultaneously trying to convince Russia and China that Iran is seeking a weapon, and pressing them to tell Tehran that neither would block action at the Security Council.

"The trouble is that when they say they'll give it serious study, it doesn't mean they'll accept it," David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a nonpartisan research group that follows developments in Iran, said of Mr. Vaeedi's statement. "Iran's problem is that just to turn down the Russian proposal adds a lot of support to those who want to bring the matter to the Security Council."

The Europeans suspended the talks with Iran in August when Iran, breaking an agreement to cease all uranium processing activities while the talks were under way, began converting uranium into gas at a plant in Isfahan, an activity that it has vowed to continue.

The conversion into a gas is a major step in producing nuclear fuel, and the Europeans and Americans seem willing to allow that to go forward in Iran, though for much of the year they have said even that technology could not remain in Iranian hands.

The next step would be the enrichment of the gas into material that can be used either to generate electricity or to build a bomb, which is the stage of the process that Russia has offered to conduct. Russia would stand to earn tens of millions of dollars in fees for the service.

Following the suspension of negotiations, the next natural move for the Europeans and the United States would have been to carry out a longstanding threat to refer Iran to the Security Council for sanctions. But the Western countries have hesitated to do that because of a likely veto of sanctions by Russia and China, both of which have major commercial ties to Iran.

The European strategy since then has clearly been to hold open the possibility of resuming talks, either to make real progress on the substance of Iran's nuclear program, or to persuade Russia and China that everything has been done to give Iran an opportunity to come to an agreement and that the only option is sanctions.

Russia has been reported in recent weeks to be growing impatient with what it has come to see as Iranian intransigence. Russia also joined the European countries and the United States in harshly criticizing remarks by Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, in which he has denied that the Holocaust occurred and said Israel should be "wiped off the map."

Last week in Vienna, the three European countries and Iran held talks about whether to resume negotiations. The result was inconclusive, and another meeting has been scheduled for January. It was at last week's meeting that Mr. Akhondzadeh seemed to reject the Russian proposal.

The very different tone taken Wednesday by Mr. Vaeedi in Teheran could be aimed at persuading the Europeans to reopen talks, and to forestall support for sanctions by Russia and China.

"They'd seemed to be hardening over the last several months," Mr. Albright said of the Iranians, "so I'd be surprised if this statement was a real change of position."

*Richard Bernstein reported from Berlin for this article, and David E. Sanger from Waco, Tex.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/29/international/middleeast/29iran.html?pagewanted=all>

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## **Iran To Resume Its Nuclear Work; U.S. Warns Of Seeking Restraints**

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS, Jan. 3 - Iran announced Tuesday that it planned to restart nuclear research, a move that jeopardized an agreement with the Europeans, complicated a Russian initiative and prompted an American threat.

The decision, contained in a brief letter delivered Tuesday to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, declared that Iran "has decided to resume" research and development "on the peaceful nuclear energy program" that was suspended under an agreement with France, Germany and Britain in late 2004.

The letter did not define the research, but said the activities would resume Monday and be conducted "in accordance with Iran's safeguards agreement" with the I.A.E.A., the nuclear monitoring agency of the United Nations.

"Research" has been a code word for experiments in enrichment of uranium at the previously secret facility at Natanz in central Iran. There is particular concern that Iran intends to reopen that site, perhaps to conduct modest enrichment experiments or even to manufacture and assemble centrifuges for enrichment, the most sensitive part of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Iran's move complicates a Russian initiative to break the deadlock over whether Iran has the right to enrich uranium. Russia has proposed that Iran be allowed to conduct uranium enrichment activities in Russia, as a way to guarantee that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. A delegation from Moscow is scheduled to arrive in Tehran for talks this weekend, although Iranian officials have been less than enthusiastic about the proposal.

The United States warned Iran that it could face unspecified consequences if it resumed nuclear activities. "If Iran takes any further enrichment-related steps, the international community will have to consider additional measures to restrain Iran's nuclear ambitions," said Sean McCormack, a State Department spokesman.

After receiving the letter, I.A.E.A. officials described its contents to representatives of the 35 countries that make up its board, which could censure Iran by referring its case to the United Nations Security Council.

Iran has argued consistently that its decision to enter into an agreement with the Europeans to suspend all uranium conversion and enrichment activities was temporary, not required under its international treaty obligations and dependent on receiving a broad range of economic, technological, political and security incentives which it said have not been forthcoming. It has also insisted repeatedly that it has a sovereign right to develop the nuclear fuel cycle in its own territory.

Indeed, in defending Iran's decision, the letter said that the suspension of the country's nuclear-related activities under the European agreement had been "voluntary and non-legally binding."

But the United States, and to an increasing extent the Europeans, are convinced that Iran is determined to become a nuclear power and have taken a forceful stance in trying to ban Iran from conducting any nuclear activity that could help in a weapons program.

This most recent decision is certain to further erode foreign confidence in Iran's leadership.

The Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has faced broad international condemnation recently for his inflammatory statements that the Holocaust is a myth and that Israel should be "wiped off the map." On Sunday, Mr. Ahmadinejad said Europe had decided to create Israel as a "Jewish camp" in the midst of Muslim countries as the best way to rid Europe of Jews.

Last August, Iran angered its European negotiating partners and the United States when it resumed the process of converting uranium at its site at Isfahan, a clear violation of the European agreement, but only a preliminary step in mastering the nuclear fuel cycle.

Criticism of Iran's decision to restart nuclear research and development activities was swift.

Besides the American threat, a statement from the British Foreign Office called Iran's letter "unhelpful and provocative," while Cristina Gallach, a spokeswoman for the European Union, branded it "a step in the wrong direction."

France called on Iran to reverse its decision. "We want Iran to abide by the suspension of all activities related to enrichment and reprocessing," a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, told reporters.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the director of the nuclear agency, also called on Iran in a statement to maintain "its suspension of all enrichment-related activity as a key confidence-building measure" and to resolve other issues about its nuclear program.

The I.A.E.A. has repeatedly criticized Iran for failing to fully cooperate with requests to open certain facilities to its inspectors.

The agency has summoned Iranian officials to a meeting in Vienna on Wednesday to explain their intentions on research.

In a proposal presented last spring to the three European governments, Iran outlined steps that it said would advance its nuclear program, while providing assurances that its program was peaceful. Among the proposals was the installation of 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz.

On Monday, the head of the national security commission in Parliament, Alaeddin Borujerdi, said in Tehran that Iran was "determined" to reactivate the Natanz facility.

Iran could be gambling that even if it restarts nuclear research activities, it would once again avoid international sanctions. Despite threats by both the United States and the Europeans to refer Iran to the Security Council for punitive action after it resumed activities at Isfahan, the countries were forced to back down in the face of opposition from China and Russia, which each have veto power there.

In Tehran on Tuesday, Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy head of the atomic energy agency, said on state television that Iran would resume research, without providing details.

He stressed that the research "has no connection with the production of nuclear fuel," but did not specify whether that ruled out all activities related to uranium enrichment.

He also portrayed the decision as one of national self-interest, explaining that the suspension of key nuclear activities under the agreement with the Europeans had hurt Iran. "During this period our experts incurred heavy losses and many of our researchers have lost their jobs," he said.

The letter to the I.A.E.A., which was signed with a scrawl, but without a typed name identifying the official, was written on stationery of the Permanent Mission of Iran to the United Nations in Vienna.

Parts of the letter were quoted in an I.A.E.A. news release while other parts were disclosed by a European diplomat who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the fears surrounding the nuclear issue.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/04/international/middleeast/04iran.html>

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London Guardian

January 4, 2006

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## **Secret Services Say Iran Is Trying To Assemble A Nuclear Missile**

*Document seen by Guardian details web of front companies and middlemen*

By Ian Cobain and Ian Traynor, The Guardian

The Iranian government has been successfully scouring Europe for the sophisticated equipment needed to develop a nuclear bomb, according to the latest western intelligence assessment of the country's weapons programmes.

Scientists in Tehran are also shopping for parts for a ballistic missile capable of reaching Europe, with "import requests and acquisitions ... registered almost daily", the report seen by the Guardian concludes.

The warning came as Iran raised the stakes in its dispute with the United States and the European Union yesterday by notifying the International Atomic Energy Authority that it intended to resume nuclear fuel research next week. Tehran has refused to rule out a return to attempts at uranium enrichment, the key to the development of a nuclear weapon.

The 55-page intelligence assessment, dated July 1 2005, draws upon material gathered by British, French, German and Belgian agencies, and has been used to brief European government ministers and to warn leading industrialists of the need for vigilance when exporting equipment or expertise to so-called rogue states.

It concludes that Syria and Pakistan have also been buying technology and chemicals needed to develop rocket programmes and to enrich uranium. It outlines the role played by Russia in the escalating Middle East arms build-up, and examines the part that dozens of Chinese front companies have played in North Korea's nuclear weapons programme.

But it is the detailed assessment of Iran's nuclear purchasing programme that will most alarm western leaders, who have long refused to believe Tehran's insistence that it is not interested in developing nuclear weapons and is trying only to develop nuclear power for electricity. Governments in the west and elsewhere have also been dismayed by recent pronouncements from the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has said that Holocaust denial is a "scientific debate" and that Israel should be "wiped off the map".

The leak of the intelligence report may signal a growing frustration at Iran's refusal to bow to western demands that it abandon its programme to produce fuel for a Russian-built nuclear reactor due to come on stream this year.

The assessment declares that Iran has developed an extensive web of front companies, official bodies, academic institutes and middlemen dedicated to obtaining - in western Europe and in the former Soviet Union - the expertise,

training, and equipment for nuclear programmes, missile development, and biological and chemical weapons arsenals.

"In addition to sensitive goods, Iran continues intensively to seek the technology and know-how for military applications of all kinds," it says.

The document lists scores of Iranian companies and institutions involved in the arms race. It also details Tehran's growing determination to perfect a ballistic missile capable of delivering warheads far beyond its borders.

It notes that Iran harbours ambitions of developing a space programme, but is currently concentrating on upgrading and extending the range of its Shahab-3 missile, which has a range of 750 miles - capable of reaching Israel.

Iranian scientists are said to be building wind tunnels to assist in missile design, developing navigation technology, and acquiring metering and calibration technology, motion simulators and x-ray machines designed to examine rocket parts. The next generation of the Shahab ("shooting star" in Persian) should be capable of reaching Austria and Italy.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/iran/story/0,12858,1677542,00.html>

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Los Angeles Times

January 5, 2006

## Iran Said To Seek Nuclear Technology In Europe

*A British newspaper discloses a European intelligence finding that Tehran is covertly trying to acquire components and knowledge.*

By John Daniszewski, Times Staff Writer

LONDON — One day after Iran publicly confirmed it would resume nuclear research, a newspaper reported Wednesday that Tehran had been seeking components and know-how in Europe for nuclear weapons and missiles. Iran responded quickly to the front-page report in the Guardian newspaper based on a leaked European intelligence document. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the article was intended to harm Iran's "transparent" efforts to obtain civilian nuclear power.

The report seemed certain to add to high anxieties in the West about Iran's nuclear intentions.

The Tehran government says it hopes to produce nuclear fuel only for power-generating purposes, but European governments and the United States have long feared Iran also is focused on creating nuclear weapons.

Representatives of Britain, Germany and France have been negotiating with Iran for more than a year to accept limits on its nuclear activities.

According to the Guardian, its reporters were allowed to see a 55-page intelligence document drawing on findings of British, French, German and Belgian security agencies and assessing the Iranian nuclear activities.

Dated July 1, the document concluded that Iran had been combing Europe for parts for weapons and a ballistic missile capable of reaching Europe, and that "import requests and acquisitions [are] registered almost daily," the Guardian reported.

The newspaper said the document might have been leaked in response to mounting frustration at Iran's refusal to heed Western calls to give up its program to produce fuel for its Bushehr nuclear power plant. The facility on Iran's southern coast was planned before the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Under construction over the last decade with Russian help, it is nearing completion.

"In addition to sensitive goods, Iran continues intensively to seek the technology and know-how for military applications of all kinds," the Guardian quoted the document as saying.

The paper did not say who made the intelligence document available to its reporters, but said that the analysis was produced for European governments so that they could warn industrialists to be careful about what they sell or export to Iran.

It said that Iran was using a network of front companies and agents to shop for technology in Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Iran said Tuesday that it would resume nuclear fuel research next week and that it had informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna of its decision.

Iran delivered a letter to the IAEA saying its nuclear body planned to resume research and development on its "peaceful nuclear energy program" on Jan. 9, ending a voluntary suspension of such activities since late 2003.

"Research has nothing to do with nuclear fuel production and is a separate issue," Mohammed Saeedi, deputy director of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told Iranian state television.

Asked about the Guardian report, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman told Reuters news agency that the article was intended to "negatively affect Iran's transparent measures and its cooperation with the IAEA."

Iran resumed work to convert raw uranium into gas in August, and its announcement Tuesday was seen as raising the stakes before another round of negotiations with European diplomats scheduled Jan. 18.

Washington, which does not have official relations with Iran, has backed the Europeans' diplomatic effort.

If the talks fail, Iran could be referred to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions. However, there is no international consensus that Iran should be punished over its program.

Russia has offered a compromise under which uranium could be enriched on Russian territory, then be safeguarded for use by Iran for power-generating purposes only.

Iran says it is still evaluating the offer.

Western governments are concerned that if Iran enriches uranium on its territory, some could be diverted to make weapons.

Western pressure to keep Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons has gained urgency since the election in June of conservative President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has attracted attention by calling the Holocaust a myth and suggesting that Israel be relocated from the Middle East.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran5jan05.1.5989401.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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New York Times

January 5, 2006

## **Iran Declares Its Nuclear Plan Nonnegotiable**

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS, Jan. 4 - Iran vowed Wednesday to proceed with a plan to restart nuclear research next week, though the government has yet to explain to the United Nations' nuclear monitoring agency what activities it intends to carry out.

Ali Larijani, the senior official in charge of nuclear issues, was quoted on Iranian state television on Wednesday as saying the decision to resume nuclear research was "nonnegotiable."

Responding to criticism that the decision would violate Iran's formal agreement with Europe to suspend all uranium conversion and enrichment activities, he said: "Research has its own definition. It is not related to industrial production. Hence, it was never part of the negotiations."

Late Tuesday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took a similar hard line. "We will not take a step back on our path," he was quoted by state television as saying.

The Iranian news agency ISNA further quoted Mr. Ahmadinejad as saying Western countries "are so rude that if we allow them, they will tell us to shut down all our universities, whereas research has no restrictions or red lines."

Iran informed the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in writing on Tuesday that it planned to resume nuclear fuel research and development next Monday and asked the agency to make the necessary preparations to monitor the activities.

Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, pressed Iran's ambassador to the I.A.E.A., Muhammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh, for an explanation of Iran's intentions and warned him that Iran should not proceed, according to officials from two European nations briefed on the meeting.

Dr. ElBaradei told the ambassador that the decision to restart nuclear research on its fuel cycle was a regrettable development, adding that Iran must consider the potential consequences, the officials said.

The ambassador responded that Iran was not ready to provide the agency with the technical details of its decision, the officials said. The technical meeting was tentatively scheduled for Thursday, when Muhammad Saeedi, the deputy head of Iran's atomic energy agency, is expected to arrive in Vienna to lead the delegation that will clarify Iran's announcement, they added.

The officials insisted on anonymity because their governments do not authorize them to talk on the record. I.A.E.A. officials declined to comment.

Criticism of the Iranian decision continued Wednesday. "We regard the recent announcement by Iran of its intention to resume research and development activities with concern," Martin Jaeger, a spokesman for Germany's Foreign Ministry, said at a news conference in Berlin. "We would encourage Iran to abstain from unilateral steps."

The French Foreign Ministry spokesman, Jean-Baptiste Mattei, told reporters that the announcement was "very worrying" and added, "We firmly call on Iran to revoke this announcement."

On Iranian state television on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki insisted that "Iran is ready for negotiations with the European Union" this month.

The next round of talks is scheduled for Jan. 18. But Britain, France and Germany, the three nations that negotiated the November 2004 nuclear accord with Iran, have said Iran's decision could jeopardize talks.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/05/international/middleeast/05iran.html?pagewanted=all>



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London Guardian  
January 5, 2006

## Clandestine Nuclear Deals Traced To Sudan

By Ian Traynor and Ian Cobain, The Guardian

International investigators and western intelligence have for the first time named Sudan as a major conduit for sophisticated engineering equipment that could be used in nuclear weapons programmes.

Hundreds of millions of pounds of equipment was imported into the African country over a three-year period before the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington in 2001 and has since disappeared, according to Guardian sources.

Western governments, UN detectives and international analysts trying to stem the illicit trade in weapons of mass destruction technology are alarmed by the black market trade.

A European intelligence assessment obtained by the Guardian says Sudan has been using front companies and third countries to import machine tools, gauges and hi-tech processing equipment from western Europe for its military industries in recent years.

But it says that Sudan is also being used as a conduit, as much of the equipment is too sophisticated for use in the country itself.

"The suspicion arises that at least some of the machinery was not destined for or not only destined for Sudan," the assessment says. "Among the equipment purchased by Sudan there are dual-use goods whose use in Sudan appears implausible because of their high technological standard."

Western analysts and intelligence agencies suspect the equipment has been or is being traded by the nuclear proliferation racket headed by the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, who admitted nuclear trading two years ago and is under house arrest in Islamabad.

Khan is known to have visited Sudan at least once between 1998 and 2002, and the suspicion is he may have used the country as a warehouse for the hi-tech engineering equipment he was selling to Libya, Iran and North Korea for the assembly of centrifuges for enriching uranium, the most common way of building a nuclear bomb.

Sudan has been ravaged by internal conflicts for decades, and has until recently been governed by an Islamist regime.

Analysts point out that a "failing state" such as Sudan is an ideal candidate for the illicit trading.

David Albright, who is investigating the various players in the Khan network and tracks nuclear proliferation for the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, said about £20m worth of dual-use engineering equipment was imported by Sudan between 1999 and 2001.

The purchases were denominated in German marks (before the introduction of the euro), suggesting that at least some of the equipment came from Germany.

Investigators say the machinery has not been found in Sudan. Nor has it been found in Libya, since Tripoli gave up its secret nuclear bomb project in December 2003. Given Osama bin Laden's long relationship with Sudan, where he lived before moving to Afghanistan, there had been suspicions of al-Qaida involvement. But the goods have not been found in Afghanistan either.

"A huge amount of dual-use equipment was bought by Sudan and people don't know where it went to," Mr Albright said. "It's a big mystery. The equipment has not been found anywhere."

A senior international investigator confirmed that Sudan had been importing the material and that the transports had ceased in 2001.

"No one now seems to be buying to that extent," he said. "Perhaps the activity stopped because they got all that they needed."

While the Khan operation is a main suspect, Iran is also suspected of being behind the Sudanese dealings.

"There is the Khan network and then there is a much bigger network in this, and that is the Iranian network," the investigator said.

Yesterday, the Guardian reported that the same European intelligence assessment - which draws on material gathered by British, French, German and Belgian agencies - concluded that the Iranian government had been successfully scouring Europe for the sophisticated equipment needed to build a nuclear bomb.

Western intelligence and Mr Albright identified a state-owned firm in Khartoum as a "pivotal organisation" in Sudan's procurement of weapons and dual-use technology in eastern and western Europe and Russia.

The named company has offices in Tehran, Moscow, Sofia, Istanbul and Beijing. According to the European intelligence assessment, the company "is cooperating intensively with Iran".

"It is striking," says the document, "that [the company's] partners are enterprises subordinate to Iran's Defence Industries Organisation. Technology transfer between these two states and links between their programmes cannot be ruled out."

While the machinery was dual-use, meaning that it could be used in civil or military applications, Mr Albright said he understood the equipment was "nuclear-related".

"For the people following this, the interest is whether it's nuclear. The assumption is it is."

The likelihood that the machinery was for Sudan is slim, say experts and investigators.

"The idea that Sudan could buy and make use of extremely sophisticated nuclear technology is obviously a question mark," said Jon Wolfsthal, a nuclear proliferation expert at Washington's Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Sudan is known to have a small civilian nuclear programme, researching nuclear medicine, radiological safety and food irradiation techniques.

Never before has it been suspected of involvement in nuclear weapons research, however. It signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 2004.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/sudan/story/0,14658,1678336,00.html>

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New York Times

January 6, 2006

## **Iran's Nuclear Team Fails To Keep A Date With The U.N.**

By Elaine Sciolino

PARIS, Jan. 5 - Iran threw negotiations over its nuclear program into disarray on Thursday, abruptly canceling a high-level meeting with the United Nations' monitoring agency in Vienna. The leader of Iran's negotiating team was said to be returning to Tehran.

The unexpected turn of events stunned and frustrated officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency and foreign diplomats, who scrambled to make sense of Iran's decision. The meeting had been scheduled so Iran could explain its decision to restart nuclear research and development on Monday.

"There was no explanation," said Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the agency. "We're still seeking clarification."

One possible explanation is that Iran has decided to defy the rest of the world and plunge ahead with nuclear activities, which risk international censure or sanctions and could shatter a 14-month agreement with France, Britain and Germany under which Iran agreed to suspend most of its nuclear work.

Another explanation is that in the face of strong international criticism, Iran's negotiating strategy is in chaos. Since President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took power last year in Iran, officials who were part of its national security apparatus, including its nuclear negotiating team, have been replaced with people who are driven by hard-line views. Certainly Iran's failure to explain its intentions erodes trust in the country as a reliable negotiating partner. In its letter to the atomic energy agency two days earlier announcing its research plans, Iran gave assurances that it intended to carry out the work under the supervision of agency inspectors, and asked the agency to take the necessary steps for the research to start again.

That position raised speculation that Iran was trying to test whether it could proceed with its nuclear program and stay within the boundaries of its international legal obligations, even if that violated its agreement with the Europeans.

In an address in Qum carried on state television on Thursday, Mr. Ahmadinejad repeated his assertions of Iran's intention to carry out nuclear research, saying some people "have said the Iranian nation has no right to nuclear research, but they should know that the Iranian nation and government will defend the right to nuclear research and technology, and will go forward prudently."

The negotiating team, led by Mohammad Saeedi, the deputy chief of Iran's atomic energy agency, had been expected to meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday with the director of the United Nations agency.

At first, the Iranians said in a telephone conversation that they would be late. Then, in a later telephone call, they canceled the meeting. Mr. Saeedi was returning home, the Iranian delegation told the agency.

That move suggested that there would be no explanation of Iran's intentions before it resumes its research on Monday.

American and European officials and some experts at the atomic energy agency said they were concerned that the research could focus on small-scale enrichment experiments, which could help advance Iran's knowledge about how to produce nuclear fuel - either for civilian plants or, at higher enrichment levels, for weapons.



In Washington on Thursday, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Iran not to resume nuclear research, saying, "They shouldn't do it because it would really be a sign that they are not prepared to actually make diplomacy work."

She expressed confidence that the United States would succeed in taking Iran's case to the Security Council for an unspecified punishment should negotiations fail. However, the United States has thus far failed to persuade Russia and China to seek punitive measures, a difficult step because there is no clear-cut violation of Iran's obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Iran's decision in August to restart uranium conversion activities in Isfahan violated the European agreement. But inspectors from the United Nations agency were there to break the seals on the equipment and have been monitoring the activities, which do not violate Iran's obligations under the treaty.

One official close to the talks said the Iranians were believed to have withdrawn because they had been caught off-guard by the uncompromising stance of Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency's director, in messages and in a meeting on Wednesday with Iran's ambassador to the United Nations office in Vienna, Mohammad Mehdi Akhondzadeh.

The official declined to be identified by name or even national origin because the official is not authorized to speak for attribution.

Dr. ElBaradei and his colleagues have harshly criticized Iran's decision to restart nuclear research, warning Iran of potential consequences of its action.

Among the issues outstanding are Iran's refusal to allow inspectors access to a site in Tehran called Lavisan-Shian, which was bulldozed by Iran in 2004 before it could be inspected. The agency wants to interview scientists who worked there and determine whether they were conducting nuclear research.

Another mystery is how Iran first obtained centrifuges used to enrich uranium. The agency is also still not convinced by Iran's explanations about the sources of both low- and high-enriched uranium found in Iran.

The Iranian delegation was apparently unprepared to respond to questions like these on Thursday, the official close to the talks said.

A number of Iranian officials, including President Ahmadinejad, have boldly asserted Iran's right to conduct nuclear research and its intention to proceed as scheduled, despite warnings from that to do so would risk punitive measures. Iran's right to develop nuclear technology for peaceful energy purposes is extremely popular in Iran, and the president's remarks on Thursday were greeted with cries of "Ahmadinejad, our hero, we support you," Reuters reported from Tehran.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/06/international/middleeast/06iran.html?pagewanted=all>

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Washington Post

January 6, 2006

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## **U.S. Has Votes On Iran, Rice Says**

### ***Possible Referral of Nuclear Issue to U.N. Council Noted***

By Glenn Kessler, Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said yesterday that the United States and its European allies have the votes to bring Iran before the U.N. Security Council for possible censure over its nuclear ambitions, signaling increasing skepticism that continued negotiations with Iran will ever succeed.

"The Iranians are digging their own hole of isolation deeper and deeper," Rice said at a breakfast with State Department reporters, referring to Iran's announcement this week that it will resume nuclear fuel research after voluntarily suspending much of its program in 2004 to hold talks with Britain, France and Germany. Iranian officials failed to appear yesterday at a planned meeting to explain their decision to the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Rice would not lay out a timeline for action, saying the administration wants to get as large a vote as possible from the IAEA's 35-nation board of governors to refer the matter to the Security Council. But she asserted that the Bush administration has worked hard in the past year to build a consensus for action, first by settling differences with European allies over the best diplomatic approach and then by demonstrating that the Iranians are not serious about the talks.

"The European-American consensus is very strong. Others are coming to that consensus," Rice said. "That's not saber rattling. That's diplomacy."

During the breakfast, Rice was expansive about her goals for the coming year, stressing the push for democracy in the Middle East, stabilizing Iraq and Afghanistan, and building stronger ties with India. She expressed sorrow over the stroke that appears to have removed Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon from the Israeli political scene, but she

refused to engage in a discussion about what the political turmoil would mean for Middle East peace efforts. The desire for peace "runs wide and deep in the Israeli society," she said.

Sharon's illness should not be an excuse for delaying Palestinian legislative elections scheduled for later this month, Rice added. Palestinian officials have suggested that the election could be delayed, especially with the prospect that the Islamic Resistance Movement, the militant group known as Hamas, is poised to make significant gains. "I don't really believe that we can favor postponing the elections because we fear an outcome," Rice said.

Rice criticized Russia for the "obviously political" decision by its state-controlled energy company to shut off natural gas to Ukraine on Jan. 1, the day it assumed the presidency of the Group of Eight industrialized countries. Russia backed down a day later, but Rice said the incident raised questions about the gap between "Russian behavior" and "what would be expected of a responsible member of the G-8."

Rice, who in the past year visited 49 countries and plans to depart for Indonesia and Australia this weekend, said her first year as secretary of state has been "an extraordinary year . . . an exciting year, a year that I've enjoyed very much." This year, she said, she will emphasize her goal of "transformational diplomacy" at the State Department, which she described as an effort to remake the culture of the Foreign Service from merely reporting on events overseas to actually shaping them.

"We're seeing around the world we are more engaged now on the ground, hands on," Rice said. She added that the project will result in changing the training and deployment of Foreign Service officers.

Rice's unusually blunt comments on Iran suggested that the administration is gearing up for a major push to bring Iran before the U.N. Security Council. "I don't have any doubt that at the right time, a time of our choosing, we're going to go to the Security Council if the Iranians are not prepared to do what they say they want to do, which is to pursue peaceful nuclear energy," Rice said.

"When it's clear that negotiations are exhausted, we have the votes," she said. "There is a resolution sitting there for referral. We'll vote it."

But a European diplomat familiar with the Iranian diplomacy said Rice's prediction appears too optimistic. The diplomat, speaking on the condition of anonymity to be able to comment more freely, said the Americans and the Europeans still have a lot of work to do and it is "no easy sale" yet, though the allies are arguing that referring the matter to the Security Council would be done mainly to support the IAEA, not to immediately impose sanctions. The diplomat said a number of countries appear sympathetic to Iran's argument that it has a right to enrich uranium under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), in part because they hope to reserve the option of one day doing it themselves.

Even if the referral is made to the Security Council, it is not clear how quickly the United States could muster support for additional actions. Nearly three years ago, the IAEA referred North Korea to the council for violating the NPT, but the matter has languished and no action has been taken.

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## **Why North Korea Will Not Give Up The Bomb**

By Bennett Ramberg

LOS ANGELES--As 2005 came to an end, vitriol had replaced negotiation in efforts to hold the North Korean government to its September nuclear disarmament agreement. Recent name-calling reflects historic jockeying by both sides. But beyond the rhetoric there remains a deeper reality. For Kim Jong Il, nuclear weapons and regime survival are synonymous.

So what are the chances that Washington and its allies will overcome this mindset in 2006? Two precedents provide answers. In 1991, South Africa abandoned its nuclear undertaking and in 2003, Libya followed suit. The atomic histories of each have much to tell about the prospects for North Korea. Unfortunately, both suggest that Pyongyang will continue to pose a nuclear headache throughout the year and beyond.

Under the veneer of a peaceful nuclear explosives program to dig harbors and oil storage cavities, South Africa manufactured six atomic bombs. The motivations included international isolation fed by apartheid and the belief that such weapons would deter a growing Soviet and Cuban threat along South Africa's borders. The effort benefited from the country's indigenous uranium resources, a talented scientific establishment and the dedication of President P.W. Botha.

Libya never acquired nuclear weapons but spent decades trying. Its leader, Muammar el-Qaddafi, sought to buy a weapon from China, enrichment equipment from France, reactors from the United States, a nuclear-armed submarine from the Soviet Union, and to annex uranium-laden land from Chad.

Tripoli had some success in the 1990s when the smuggling network of the Pakistani nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan provided the rudiments of a nuclear centrifuge program and weapons designs, which added to Libya's other black-market catches.

What moved South Africa and Libya to reverse course? In South Africa, the withdrawal of Soviet and Cuban forces lifted the bomb's *raison d'être*. Botha's successor, F.W. de Klerk, viewed its elimination as one of the acts required to end South Africa's international isolation.

For Libya, international isolation after the 1988 Lockerbie bombing posed an increasing economic and strategic burden. Oil revenue plummeted, leaving the economy in disarray. Libya, which had been a promoter of terrorism, now found itself a target of the new breed of Islamic terrorist, which international assistance could help suppress. Then there was the threat of a pre-emptive American strike, coupled with events in Iraq. Nuclear termination provided the lure to get the West to deal.

The roots of North Korea's nuclear program go deeper. Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions were stirred during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. After North Korea received a Soviet research reactor in 1960, indigenous talent generated additional plants. With the fall of the Soviet Union, nuclear ardor grew as the North found itself adrift.

For Kim Jong Il, nuclear weapons provide a way to preserve his fiefdom. They generate international tension that justifies the garrison state. They compensate for conventional military weaknesses, providing a hedge against perceived U.S. military designs. They furnish leverage to extract international humanitarian assistance and economic investment from a nervous Seoul.

So it should come as no surprise that Pyongyang followed September's agreement with a demand for an American nuclear power plant that could take a decade to build. Such expressions are designed to drag out diplomacy into the indefinite future.

Unlike Libya and South Africa, North Korea has not arrived at the condition necessary for abandoning its nuclear ways: a willingness to reduce its self-imposed political isolation. Rather, it continues to view isolation as the key to regime preservation.

As a result, a nuclear-armed North Korea will remain part of the international landscape for the foreseeable future. Two grave challenges follow: preventing North Korea from initiating nuclear war because of fears of pre-emption; and stemming nuclear exports to terrorists or rogue states. With nuclear disarmament a chimera, the six-party talks would do well to focus on reducing these risks instead.

*Bennett Ramberg served in the State Department in the administration of President George H.W. Bush.*

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