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Washington Times
June 3, 2004
Pg. 15

U.S. Says Tehran Is Hiding Nuclear Plans

By Michael Adler, Agence France-Presse

VIENNA, Austria — The United States accused Iran yesterday of using deceit and denial to hide its clandestine development of nuclear weapons, after damning revelations from the U.N. nuclear watchdog on the Islamic republic’s atomic energy program.

Kenneth Brill, the U.S. ambassador to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told reporters that Iran's refusal to fully cooperate with the agency "fits a long-term pattern of denial and deception that can only be designed to mask Iran's military nuclear program."

An IAEA report released on Tuesday said agency inspectors had found more traces in Iran of highly enriched uranium that could be weapons-grade.

The IAEA also reported that Iran, which insists its nuclear program is for peaceful, civilian purposes, has admitted to importing parts for sophisticated P-2 centrifuges for enriching uranium, going back on claims that it had made the parts domestically.
"Almost two years after the IAEA became aware of Iran's covert nuclear program, and fully one year after the discovery of Iran's attempts to conceal their work at the Kalaye Electric Company [in Tehran], delayed access, inconsistent stories and unanswered questions continue to be the hallmark of Iranian cooperation with the agency," Mr. Brill said.

"Even a disinterested observer must now ask, what is it that the Iranians are so intent on hiding?" Mr. Brill asked. The IAEA report is to be submitted to the agency's 35-nation board of governors on June 14. The United States has called for the IAEA, which has been investigating the Iranian program since February 2003, to refer the Islamic republic to the U.N. Security Council for possible international sanctions.

In Tehran, top nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani said yesterday that Iran had "no secret nuclear activities." Mr. Rowhani said: "Iran's nuclear dossier is on the way to being sorted out and there is nothing very important that is pending."

But Mr. Brill said: "Iran is still stalling, providing last-minute declarations and contradicting earlier definitive statements. The IAEA continues to find new, incriminating evidence of undeclared activity. ..."

"The question is how long the [IAEA] board of governors and the international community will tolerate this," he said.

Diplomats and experts said they expected nothing to happen in the short term because Washington does not have a "smoking gun" to prove Iran is making nuclear weapons.

"The United States is stymied unless the IAEA can come up with some devastating revelation that Iran is lying or hiding something," said Gary Samore, a London-based nonproliferation expert. He said the Iranians may even be emboldened with their success in putting off the IAEA to resume the enrichment of uranium, something they voluntarily suspended in order to build confidence with the international community.

A Western diplomat close to the IAEA said such a move by Iran "would spark a crisis with [Britain, France and Germany] and others and I don't think that's a price Tehran wants to pay."

Highly enriched uranium can be used for fuel in reactors but also the explosive in atomic bombs.

Another diplomat said nothing less than the international non-proliferation regime was at stake in Iran. The diplomat said getting to the bottom of the Iranian program was "difficult but crucial for nonproliferation and for the IAEA."

"If progress is slow, there will come a time when the Europeans will have to reflect on their policy," the diplomat said.

http://www.washtimes.com/world/20040602-100748-5221r.htm

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Christian Science Monitor
June 3, 2004

Tough US Rhetoric As Iran's Nuclear Intent Remains Unclear

By Scott Peterson, Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

MOSCOW – Questions remain about the intent of Iran's nuclear programs, according to a critical new report by UN inspectors that details misleading claims and contradictory declarations from Tehran.

Iran said that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will soon be able to confirm Iran has no nuclear-weapon plans. Its report "shows Iran's nuclear case is approaching the end," though Iran expects to keep a uranium-enrichment capability, Hassan Rohani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council and top nuclear negotiator, said Wednesday.

But the results are likely to provide ammunition for critics - especially Washington, which charges that Iran has been pursuing nuclear weapons under the guise of a peaceful atomic-energy program. The report presents a challenge to Iran, which has made clear it expects the IAEA to close a two-year inquiry into Iran's once-secret nuclear programs at a meeting June 14.

"I'm not terribly optimistic right now," says Michael Donovan, an Iran specialist at the Center for Defense Information in Washington. "The last 10 months, we've seen clear signs the Iranians are trying to pull every rabbit out of the hat to avoid a thorough reckoning with the IAEA."

The confidential report, released to IAEA members Tuesday, and obtained by the Monitor, cited "good progress" in some cases, along with "changing or contradictory information." Inconsistencies include:

* Iran's acknowledgment that 4.19 lbs. of uranium hexafluoride, once declared lost, was in fact used for research.
* Key centrifuge parts for enriching uranium have been imported from another country - known to be Pakistan - despite Iranian denials.
* Some nuclear work has been carried out at military sites, contrary to Iran's declarations. IAEA access has been difficult.
The source of trace amounts of 36 percent enriched uranium is unknown.

Despite Iran's promise to the IAEA in February that it would cease all uranium-enrichment activities, inspectors found that, since then, 285 new rotors for P-1 centrifuges have been assembled. 

"The jury is out on whether the program has been dedicated exclusively for peaceful purposes or if it has some military dimension," IAEA chief Mohamed El-Baradei said Tuesday. "We haven't seen concrete proof of a military program so it's premature to make a judgment on that."

President Mohamed Khatami warned Thursday about US "political pressure" on the IAEA. "We are sure that even if we respond to all the agency's demands, the US will still look for excuses," he said. "We will resume enrichment if necessary."

In a watershed decision supported by all of Iran's power centers, Iran last December signed the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which permits intrusive snap inspections. Tehran expects help in return for its atomic-energy program - a right codified in the NPT.

But tough US rhetoric hasn't eased. One result, analysts say, is that Iran may be deliberately slowing its cooperation.

"The Americans have politicized this process so much," says Mohamed Hadi Semati, a political scientist at Tehran University who is now at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. 

Some say Iran should keep its programs and "accept the pressure and the cost," says Mr. Semati. "The conservatives have pulled back a step, in terms of their agreement with the IAEA."

Iran handed over a 1,000-page dossier Friday that it said gives "all the information" the IAEA needs to clear up questions.

"What we're seeing now is ... skirmishing before the big showdown, which will come when Iran begins to enrich uranium with the centrifuges," says Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington. "Right now the Iran strategy is to give the IAEA the minimum necessary to keep it from condemning Iran as noncomplying."

"The US is trying to figure out how to get a united front against the Iranians," Milhollin adds. 

Despite calls from some hard-liners to pull out of the NPT altogether, Tehran last October promised European leaders that Iran would work with the IAEA and sign the additional protocol. That deal was made with a "good cop, bad cop" routine, since the US ratcheted up rhetoric against Tehran soon after toppling Hussein. 

"It was a credit to the Bush administration that they allowed it to work without trying to strong-arm the bureaucracy into a censure," says CDI's Donovan.

But tough US talk - including branding Iran part of an "axis of evil" - is taking a toll. Iran wants nuclear weapons "because of national prestige, and the fact that they are now surrounded by US military forces," says Donovan. "The Bush administration has played no small role in perpetuating the Iranian desire for a nuclear weapon with that kind of rhetoric."

Also, scant benefits of its deal with the West have been felt in Tehran, where the nuclear debate into a political hot potato.

Many ordinary Iranians say they want nuclear weapons, and would see giving up the nuclear fuel cycle as a sellout. Semati says Iran's powerful conservatives aren't "interested in nuclear weapons right now.... [They want] to have the capability, to give them the chance to go nuclear if they have a threat to deter.... This is the ultimate aim of the government."

http://www.csmonitor.com/2004/0603/p05s01-wome.html

New York Times
June 4, 2004

U.S. To Make Deep Cuts In Stockpile Of A-Arms

By Matthew L. Wald

WASHINGTON, June 3 - The United States will reduce its stockpile of nuclear weapons by nearly half over the next eight years, the Energy Department said Thursday. 

The Bush administration made the decision last month and informed Congress on Tuesday in a classified report. Linton F. Brooks, administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which is part of the Energy Department, said in a conference call with reporters that the reductions would leave the nation with "the smallest nuclear-weapons stockpile we've had in several decades." He called the decision historic.

Mr. Brooks would not discuss specific numbers for the cuts. "The numbers I'm prepared to use are 'almost in half' and 'smallest in several decades,'" he said.
The decision by the administration followed an announcement by President Bush in November 2001 that the nation would reduce the number of "operationally deployed" strategic warheads by about two-thirds by 2012, leaving 1,700 to 2,200 warheads.

But that announcement did not commit the United States to reduce the total number of weapons in its inventory, only the number of strategic weapons that were ready to use immediately.

The new decision includes additional categories of weapons, including short-range weapons that are not considered strategic, weapons held in reserve and weapons in places like nuclear submarines that are in overhaul and "logistical spares," which are used to swap with weapons being recalled for overhaul.

When Mr. Bush promised in 2001 to cut the number of actively deployed strategic weapons to no more than 2,200, the United States had 6,100, according to Tom Cochran, an expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, a group that specializes in nuclear weapons, among other environmental issues. The United States had 10,000 nuclear weapons in all categories, and the announcement made Thursday will cut that to 6,100, Mr. Cochran said, suggesting that the overall reduction would be somewhat less than Mr. Brooks's figure.

Some of the weapons to be removed from the active category will be dismantled, and some will go into the reserve category, meaning that they could be returned to readiness quickly; some of the weapons now in the reserve will be decommissioned, Mr. Cochran said.

In practice, the weapons to be retired will join a long queue at an Energy Department plant in Amarillo, Tex., called Pantex, which is now busy with "life extension" of existing weapons, Mr. Brooks said. He said that President George Bush, who left office in 1993, decided to retire the nation's stock of nuclear artillery shells, "and we just finished dismantling the last one last year."

Mr. Brooks said in a letter to members of Congress that making the stockpile smaller would require more work on the remaining weapons. "We must continue the administration's efforts to restore the nuclear weapons infrastructure," he said in an unclassified cover letter to the memo describing the schedule for reducing arms from now to 2012.

In the conference call, Mr. Brooks said that the decision to reduce the stockpile meant that a new bomb plant that the administration wants to build, the Modern Pit Facility, could be smaller than it might have otherwise been, but that it would still be needed. Pits are the hearts of plutonium weapons, and the Energy Department lost most of its capacity to make pits when it closed the Rocky Flats, Colo., plant, near Denver, in the 1990's, because of environmental and production problems.

The plutonium in the pits in existing weapons is breaking down over time, Mr. Brooks said, and at some point the department will have to melt down and recast the pits. One reason for that the memo was issued Tuesday was to convince members of Congress that a new pit plant is needed, he said.

"We've not yet been able to convince some of our Congressional colleagues that the Modern Pit Facility is unrelated to any notion of future weapons development or future weapons growth," Mr. Brooks said.

In fact, the administration has shown intermittent interest in a new class of small nuclear weapons, an idea bitterly opposed by some members of Congress.

Mr. Cochran, at the Natural Resources Defense Council, agreed that the reduction was significant. But he said: "These cuts are over eight years. That's two presidential administrations. This is not a fast-paced reduction."


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Mass Destruction. Still $3 billion short, this important effort helps Russia and other countries safely store and dispose of chemical and nuclear weapon materials.

Even if the pledges were fulfilled, there still would not be enough money to get the job done. Securing the nuclear legacy of Russia alone will cost $30 billion, and there are other stockpiles of inadequately secured highly enriched uranium and weapons-grade plutonium around the world.

Presidents Bush and Vladimir V. Putin have launched a program designed to secure fissile materials around the world. But their plan will take 10 years to complete, during which time terrorists will still be able to collect fissile materials for a bomb.

Our second recommendation therefore is that the G-8 should commit to a far more aggressive timetable — within the next four or five years — for completing this important work.

Third, the G-8 nations must bring to bear all the incentives and sanctions they have at their disposal to stop proliferation. This includes closing the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty loophole that enables states like North Korea to develop nuclear weapons under the cover of programs to produce nuclear energy.

Fourth, the G-8 leaders should pledge themselves to active, person-to-person diplomacy that can help reduce the regional tensions that could lead to the use of nuclear weapons. For example, the scaling back of the nuclear threat between India and Pakistan may have opened the door to further steps to reduce the risks of a nuclear exchange.

Fifth, the leaders must commit their nations to develop and maintain a global network linking intelligence and export control efforts with border, port and airport security to ensure that nuclear materials and technology cannot be moved undetected.

Finally, although France, Russia, Britain and the United States have taken good steps to reduce their nuclear arsenals, more must be done. A failure in this regard would encourage states that do not have nuclear weapons to rebel against nonproliferation norms out of dissatisfaction with what they perceive to be a double standard: Some states get nuclear weapons, while others do not. We call on President Bush and the United States, therefore, to stop developing new nuclear weapons such as the so-called bunker buster. The United States should also sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. Together, the United States and Britain should support a fissile materials cutoff treaty that would end the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons.

Given their nuclear weapons capacities, the U.S. and European countries have a special responsibility to ensure that these terrible weapons do not spread further. Before they can fulfill this responsibility, however, they must be seen as credible proponents of nuclear nonproliferation.

The steps described here would help restore credibility to the calls for global nuclear nonproliferation, and enable the U.S. and Europe to exercise the leadership that is so desperately needed to fight proliferation.

Imagine the G-8 meeting that would follow a nuclear incident. The leaders of the industrialized world would be compelled to explain how such a terrible tragedy could have happened. It is their challenge — and responsibility — to take the necessary steps now to protect us all.

Madeleine Albright was secretary of State under President Clinton. Robin Cook was foreign secretary of Britain and is a member of Parliament.


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Philadelphia Inquirer

June 7, 2004

**Iran: Nuclear Issues Have Been Resolved**

A top official asserts that the country does not expect a U.N. agency to find fault with its program.

By Ali Akbar Dareini, Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran - Iran has answered most questions about its nuclear program and does not expect the U.N. atomic agency to declare it in violation of its international obligations, despite U.S. lobbying, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

The statement came ahead of next Monday's meeting of the 35-nation International Atomic Energy Agency's board of governors, which has wrestled for more than a year over what to do about what the United States and its allies say is a secret Iranian nuclear weapons program.

Washington wants the IAEA to declare Iran in breach of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and refer Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council, which may impose sanctions.

"The meeting will not produce what Iran's opponents are looking for," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi told reporters during a regular weekly briefing. "The U.S. is using all its capabilities [against Iran], but certainly what it is looking for will not happen. There is no doubt about it."

Iran has said its nuclear program is for peaceful energy purposes, not geared toward making bombs.
"Iran... has responded to all ambiguities. There is little left [of questions on Iran's nuclear program] on the IAEA's agenda. Iran's situation with the IAEA is very much different from the past," Asefi said.

In Vienna, Austria, a Western diplomat who asked not to be identified said that Germany, France and Britain were working on a draft resolution praising Iran for cooperation with the IAEA but urging it to clear up remaining questions about its nuclear program.

Those three countries have at past board meetings advocated a softer line than the United States, arguing that persuasion was less risky than confrontation. But Vienna-based European diplomats have in recent days suggested that - with key questions still unanswered - patience with Iran was wearing thin.

The diplomat suggested Washington would have a chance to push for toughened language in the European draft, telling the Associated Press: "There is going to be an opportunity for the U.S. to see the resolution before it's submitted."

But he indicated that any resolution could not come down too hard on Iran, saying, the board "can't make any conclusions because the Iranians stalled. We are in a holding pattern."

IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei presented a report to the board last week, saying that his agency had not found proof of a concrete link between Iran's nuclear activities and its military program, but that "it was premature to make a judgment."

The report, however, alleged that Iran had tried to buy critical parts for advanced P-2 centrifuges, which can be used for energy purposes or to enrich uranium to weapons grade.

ElBaradei's report did not appear critical enough of Iran to marshal strong support at the IAEA board meeting for Security Council action against Tehran.

Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Hasan Rowhani, acknowledged Wednesday that Iran had purchased parts that could be used for P-2 centrifuges but played down the significance. Rowhani also left open the option of producing P-2 centrifuges, prompting concern from the U.S. State Department.

Iran has confirmed it has produced P-1 centrifuges, which are used for low-grade enrichment that is not of weapons grade. It also has confirmed it has been doing research on P-2 centrifuges for years, including the production of sample parts, and has provided photos and information to the IAEA.

Iran suspended uranium enrichment last year under mounting international pressure, and in April, it said it had stopped building centrifuges. IAEA inspectors found traces of highly enriched uranium at two sites, which Iranian officials maintained was due to contaminated imported materials.

Asefi also commented on CIA director George Tenet's resignation last week, saying it was an example of the United States "acknowledging its previous wrong policies."

"We have to wait to see who will resign in the future due to wrong American policies today," Asefi said.

Regarding Iraq, Asefi said that any U.N. resolution about the country's future must do three things: "return full sovereignty to the Iraqi people, specify the duration occupying forces will stay in Iraq and clarify the relationship between the new interim government and the multinational force in Iraq."

Asefi said Tehran considered the new government a step toward full sovereignty.

The 15-nation U.N. Security Council is debating a U.S.-British draft resolution on the scheduled June 30 handover of power from the U.S.-led coalition to an interim Iraqi government named last week.


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Reuters AlertNet

FDA approves first blood test for anthrax

07 Jun 2004 15:26:51 GMT

BOSTON, June 7 (Reuters) - More than two years after anthrax killed five people in the United States, the Food and Drug Administration has approved the first blood test for the bacteria, the Boston-based company that developed the process said on Monday.

Immunetics Inc., a diagnostics technology firm, developed the test at the behest of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention after anthrax-laced letters provoked a scare just weeks after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

The test can be used by any laboratory or hospital without the need for special equipment or training.

"The approval represents a significant step forward in the public health community's ability to diagnose anthrax," Immunetics chief executive Andrew Levin said in a statement. "The test was shown to detect 100 percent of the anthrax patients tested in clinical trials, with less than a 1 percent chance of false positive results."

The test can detect both inhalational and cutaneous cases of anthrax. The bacteria is considered the top biological weapon threat and can be transmitted through inhalation of the spores, into a cut in the skin or by ingesting contaminated meat.

FDA approves first blood test for anthrax

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It can be easily cured with the use of antibiotics, but in cases of the inhaled form it is often too late to treat the patient by the time symptoms appear. Firms across the country have worked on tracking the bacteria since it infected 13 people in October 2001, killing five Americans. Last month, California-based Universal Detection Technology <UDTT.OB> introduced an anthrax detector that is to be tested by the U.S. government for use in facilities such as post offices. The government has also begun stockpiling millions of doses of an experimental anthrax vaccine developed by California-based biotechnology VaxGen Inc. <VXGN.O> and British chemical firm Avecia. http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N07669270.htm