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IAEA

Statement to the Forty-eighth Regular Session of the IAEA General Conference 2004

by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei – 20 September 2004

[...] Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Board has continued to devote considerable attention to the implementation of Iran's NPT safeguards agreement, and has adopted several resolutions urging Iran, inter alia, to demonstrate full cooperation and transparency in enabling the Agency to deal with open questions and unresolved issues. Last December, Iran signed an additional protocol and has been acting as if the protocol were in force, pending its formal ratification in accordance with Iran's constitutional requirements.

The most recent report deals with two interrelated but distinct sets of issues — the first related to the Agency's verification of Iran's compliance with its legal obligations under its NPT safeguards agreement, and the second related to the Agency's monitoring of Iran's voluntary undertakings to suspend enrichment related and reprocessing activities, as confidence building measures requested by the Board.

Regarding the first set of issues, the Agency is making steady progress in understanding the nature and extent of Iran's nuclear programme. No additional undeclared activities on the part of Iran have come to light during this period. The Agency has gained access to requested locations. Iran has also provided new information in response to Agency requests, although in certain instances the process needs to be accelerated. While in some cases information has been provided promptly, in other cases information has regrettably been provided quite late.

As a result of the Agency's investigations, some previously outstanding issues have reached the point where any further follow-up needed will be carried out as part of routine safeguards implementation.

Two issues remain central to understanding the extent and nature of Iran's nuclear programme: the origin of uranium contamination found at various locations in Iran, and the extent of Iran's efforts to import, manufacture and use centrifuges of both the P-1 and P-2 design. We have made some progress in understanding both issues, but additional investigation is needed.

With regard to confidence building measures that the Board requested be in place until certain conditions are met, as you are aware, Iran in June reversed some of its earlier decisions regarding the suspension of some enrichment related activities. I have continued to stress to Iran that, during this delicate phase while work is still in progress to verify its past nuclear programme, and in light of serious international concerns surrounding that programme, it should do its utmost to build the required confidence through the Agency.

Iran needs therefore, as the Board made it explicitly clear last week, to continue to accelerate its cooperation, pursuing a policy of maximum transparency and confidence building, so that we can bring the remaining outstanding issues to resolution within the next few months and provide assurance to the international community. This is clearly in the interest of both Iran and the international community and should, in my view, trigger a comprehensive dialogue among all interested parties on all the underlying issues. I would also urge those States from which components or materials may have originated to continue their prompt cooperation with the Agency — as this cooperation is indispensable to the Agency's ability to bring some of the important outstanding issues to closure. [...]

Statement to the forty-eight regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency

by H.E. Reza Aghazadeh, Vice-President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and President of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran – September 2004

In the name of God

The compassionate, the merciful

Mr. President;

At the outset I would like to congratulate your election to the presidency of this session. I am confident that, through your rich experiences and cooperation of the participants, the conference would enjoy full success in promoting international cooperation in peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I assure you the full co-operation of my delegation. I would like to appreciate the Director General for his report to the General Conference.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

In order to save your valuable time, I draw your kind attention to some general points regarding our nuclear policy and programs and refrain from entering into some details which will be distributed for your due consideration.

Mr. President,

The Agency is expected to promote the international co-operation on peaceful use of nuclear energy. As stipulated in articles II and III of the Statute, the Agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. The Agency is authorized to encourage and assist research on, and development and practical application of atomic energy for peaceful purposes.

The Article IV of the NPT calls upon all the Parties, as an undertaking, to facilitate, and have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for peaceful use of nuclear energy.

It is essential to note that according to the same article, nothing in this treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all parties to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

Mr. President;

A critical and fair review and assessment of the development of the past decades since the IAEA was established and the NPT entered into force, reveals the regretful fact that the spirit and the letter of the promotional provision of the Agency's Statute as well as the NPT have not been implemented. Islamic Republic of Iran had therefore no choice other than depending on its own resources and manpower in order to exercise its inalienable rights to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Mr. President;

For more than a quarter of century, in spite of sanctions, discrimination, deprivation and 8-year imposed war, our great nation has been able to stand on her feet and to struggle for independence and sustainable development.

Unjustified continuous sanctions on various items even with direct impact on humanitarian needs as well as the ones with peaceful application of nuclear energy left no other option than the national mobilization for self-sufficiency.

Remarkable achievements on various peaceful applications of nuclear technology and various stages of nuclear fuel production are the result of decades of huge investment and scientific efforts of our eminent experts.

Our great nation will not permit any interference and or interruption in our purely peaceful and indigenous nuclear program and it will not give up, at any price.

Mr. President

A new move seems to be taking sharp in recent years which, if not driven into a proper format, can stand to harm the Treaty and the Safeguards system. The apparent intention, beneath the claims for further security against proliferation, is to limit the already subdued rights of Member States for peaceful purposes. The call made earlier this year that states who have not yet acquired capability to produce nuclear fuel should forever give up this right sounds a devastating alarm.

Mr. President, distinguished Delegates,

Permit me to say a few words about the resolution adopted at the Board of Governors last week:

Some of the provisions of the resolution are in contrary to the letter and spirit of the Agency's statute and the NPT, and some are beyond the safeguards obligations. As declared by members of the Board of Governors including the sponsors of the resolution, there is a clear legal distinction between voluntary and obligatory

measures. It was expected that this issue be explicitly incorporated in the resolution. In addition to that, calling upon a Member State to suspend or to stop nuclear activities such as enrichment, uranium conversion as well as construction of research reactor planned to produce radioisotopes for medical, agricultural and industrial purposes, which are in no means prohibited in the Agency's Statute and NPT will underestimate the credibility of this august technical body which is established to promote the application of nuclear energy. These kinds of measures will also jeopardize the inalienable rights of the Member States.

If the board chooses, under pressure from certain circles to move towards adversity and confrontation, it will make matters extremely complicated and unpredictable.

Mr. President

It is just too extreme an irony, that Israel's nuclear weapons program is not only tolerated, but indeed assisted and aided and impunity is prescribed and applied to the fullest, while peaceful programs with no established evidence of diversion are scrutinized. Such acute double-standard can not, must not and will not be sustained at the Agency.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

I would like to conclude by assuring, once again, the international community that all nuclear activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are peaceful and informing the determination of my country to continue its nuclear activities without interruption, under the surveillance of the Agency in accordance with the Safeguards Agreement and the Additional Protocol.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Short Summary of Nuclear Policy and Activities of Islamic Republic of Iran

a) Nuclear Policy & Program

Iran's nuclear policy and planning are based on peaceful, transparent and independent pillars. The nuclear weapons are not in the defense doctrine of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Iran's decision and determination for nuclear electricity generation is based on well technical and financial justified facts. The added value of the limited fossil resources, the utilization of these resources in other industries because of much greater added values, the concern on environmental pollution as well as the necessity of benefiting various options of energy resources including the nuclear, has convinced the Iranian policy makers to decide on the application of nuclear energy for electricity generation to fulfill the partial requirement of national electricity demands.

Based on the aforementioned considerations the reliance on merely fossil fuels for energy generation is unreasonable. Therefore, Iran has decided to produce electricity through nuclear power plants with total capacity of 7000 MWe by 2020.

Construction of nuclear power plants requires infrastructure and establishment of the related supporting facilities such as nuclear fuels fabrication. It is obvious that in order to produce nuclear fuels indigenously, one has to implement projects on mining, uranium ore processing, uranium conversion and enrichment.

To great extent Iran's nuclear activities in uranium ore processing, uranium conversion and enrichment as well as heavy water production, research reactor, designing and manufacturing centrifuge machines are the result of R&D conducted and experiences gradually gained during last 3 decades. All these are achieved during the period of imposed sanctions and lack of cooperation of industrial countries in the area of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

The international developments have had serious impact on Iran's nuclear policy, planning and implementation processes. Few example examples are as follows:

- The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in 1980 to convene the United Nations Conference on the Promotion of International Co-operation in peaceful uses of Nuclear Energy (UNPICPUNE). The conference was mandated to identify constraints and propose ways and means for the promotion of international co-operation in this area. After almost a decade of preparation and negotiation, finally the conference was held in Geneva in 1987, but as the result of creation of obstacles by some industrial countries, particularly by Nuclear Weapon States, it failed to adopt any conclusion.
- Similar event occurred in the IAEA, where it's Committee on Assurances of Supply expected to establish internationally recognized principles and legally binding instruments failed in 1987 after 7 years of intensive deliberations.
- Technical Co-operation (TC) activities of the Agency which is an important statutory function and has direct relation to developing countries, is funded by the voluntary contributions while the Safeguards activities are funded through regular budget of the IAEA. During the last three decades the developing countries have called for rectifying the situation and establishing an assured and predictable mechanism for the IAEA Technical Co-operation. This legitimate expectation has not yet been fulfilled due to objections of few developed Member States including some Nuclear Weapon States. Their intention is that the Agency be merely a watchdog institution where its statutory promotional function be gradually diminished. In a number

or occasions the donors have threatened to halt or decrease voluntary contributions and in some cases have discriminated countries to benefit from the so called foot note-a TC projects.

Considering the aforementioned development which shows the lack of implementation of promotional pillars of Statute of the IAEA as well as provisions of the Article 4 of NPT, the Islamic Republic of Iran had no choice other than to depend on its own resources and manpower in order to exercise its inalienable rights to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

b) Latest status of the Safeguards implementation in Iran

On basis of the report of the Director General to the Board of Governors (GOV/2004/60) one could briefly conclude:

- There has been no evidence of diversion of the Iranian nuclear program for military purposes.
- Iran is acting as if it has ratified the Additional Protocol and has submitted over 1030 pages of initial declaration pursuant to Additional Protocol. And also Iran has granted 13 complementary accesses under Article 4 of the Additional Protocol.
- The Agency continues to make steady progress in understanding the Iranian nuclear programme.
- As far as the laser enrichment activities and Iran's declared uranium conversion experiments are concerned, the Agency's investigations have reached a point where further follow-up will be carried out as a routine safeguards implementation matter.
- As the result of intensive joint work by the Agency and Iran, major progress has been made towards the resolution of the origin of uranium contamination found at various locations in Iran. Based on the Agency's analysis to date, it appears plausible that the HEU contamination found at those locations may not have resulted from enrichment of uranium by Iran.
- On the issue of the extent of Iran's efforts to import, manufacture and use centrifuges of P-1 and P-2 design, the Agency has gained a better understanding of Iran's efforts relevant to both designs.
- The Agency has been able to verify Iran's suspension of enrichment related activities at related facilities and sites, and has been able to confirm that it has not observed, to date, any activities at those locations inconsistent with Iran's voluntary decision. *"Since the last report of the Director General to the Board of Governors, the Agency has been able to verify that there has been no operation or testing of any centrifuges at PFEP; that there has been no further introduction of nuclear material into any centrifuges at PFEP; that there has been no installation of new centrifuges at PFEP or installation of centrifuges at FEP; and that there has been no reprocessing at the Jabr Ibn Hayan Multipurpose Laboratories (JHL)"* (Para 54 of the report).

It has to be recalled that the suspension of enrichment was a voluntary gesture, a confidence building measure, temporary in nature and intended only to further facilitate a prompt closure of this Agenda Item.

c) Conclusion

The progressive development reported by the Director General's in his recent report to the Board of Governors would assist the Agency in drawing definitive conclusions and confirming the correctness and completeness of Iran's declarations related to all aspects of its peaceful nuclear programme and the removal of the issue from the next Agenda of the Board of Governors.

Verenigd Koninkrijk

Plenary Statement by United Kingdom

September 2004

[...] Iran

On Iran, we are pleased to note that the Director General has assessed that the Agency is making steady progress towards understanding Iran's nuclear programmes. But there are still serious questions outstanding. We regret to note that the Director General still finds that co-operation by Iran has not been sufficiently proactive. We reiterate the need for Iran to give the Agency the information and access it requires in a timely manner. This is not simply a matter of meeting legal obligations but of demonstrating a willingness to enable the Agency to fulfil its task, and so provide the international community with the assurances it requires about the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme. It is now over two years since significant doubts were openly raised about the purpose of Iran's programme and we look forward to being able to reach conclusions about this purpose in November, and decide whether any further steps are required.

We would also urge Iran to ratify its Additional Protocol without delay. Ratification would contribute to the process of rebuilding the international community's confidence in Iran's nuclear programme – confidence that was shattered by Iran choosing over an extended period to conduct undeclared, that is clandestine, nuclear activities.

In this respect, the immediate full suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, including the commissioning tests and any other production processes at the Esfahan Uranium Conversion Facility, remains of the utmost importance. We are therefore deeply concerned that Iran has never fully introduced a suspension of all activities in this area, and that it has instead chosen to demonstrate its contempt for the Board's opinion by reversing previously announced commitments. International confidence is not something to be turned on and off like a tap.

Let me be quite clear: it is not our intention to limit the right of Member States under the NPT to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, as long as the right is exercised in strict compliance with treaty obligations. Nor would we argue that suspension is among the legal obligations of Iran or any other Member State of this organisation, and we are convinced that the Resolution just adopted by the Board does not contain such an implication.

But I must equally make clear, Mr President, that my Government does see the Resolution adopted last week as a final call for full, verifiable suspension. If Iran fails to heed it, it is my Government's opinion that, come November, there may be no option but to seek the political backing of the Security Council for Iran to cooperate as requested. [...]

US State Department

U.S. Using Diplomacy on Iranian Nuclear Issue, Powell Says

Secretary of state calls IAEA's November meeting a key event
by Judy Aita – 22 September 2004

United Nations -- The United States will continue to work in concert with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the European Union (EU), and other members of the international community to resolve the issue of Iran's nuclear program, Secretary of State Colin Powell said September 22.

Speaking with journalists while attending the U.N. General Assembly session, Powell said that the United States has no plan at the present to deal with Iran independently. The issue has been a subject of bilateral discussions that top U.S. officials have been holding with other international officials attending the U.N. session.

"We have a firm policy with respect to Iran that we are following. We're working with the IAEA, we're working with the European Union, with the EU secretary-general, and we're working with like-minded nations who believe it's not in the interest of the region for Iran to have nuclear weapons," the secretary of state said.

In mid-September, the IAEA Board of Governors called on Iran to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment, a potential step to producing nuclear weapons, and said it will decide at its November meeting what, or if, further steps are required. One option is referring the matter to the U.N. Security Council, which has the authority to impose sanctions on Iran for not complying with its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations.

In its resolution, the IAEA board said that it was making steady progress towards understanding Iran's nuclear programs but said it is seriously concerned that Iran has not heeded repeated calls to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.

"[T]here's a clear understanding now that Iran must satisfy the concerns that have been expressed by the international community by the time of the November meeting," Powell said.

"If it doesn't do that by the time of the November IAEA meeting, I think there will be every reason at that point to send the matter on to the Security Council," the secretary said.

"So we're talking about diplomacy and political efforts to stop this movement on the part of the Iranians toward nuclear weapons and we're not talking about strikes. But every option . . . of course, remains on the table," Powell said.

BERICHTEN

Guardian

Iran threatens to halt access for UN nuclear inspectors

by Kasra Naji and Ian Traynor – 20 September 2004

Iran rejected UN demands that it freeze all aspects of its uranium enrichment programme yesterday,

threatening to cancel access for nuclear inspectors and abandon its international nuclear commitments if the issue is taken to the security council.

A day after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) adopted a resolution demanding an immediate and comprehensive halt to the enrichment programme, Tehran declared the call was illegal and signalled it would press ahead.

Hassan Rohani, a senior Iranian official, said no decision had been taken to "expand" Iran's freeze on the enrichment of uranium, the process which is central to building a nuclear bomb but which is allowed under international treaties to run a civilian nuclear programme.

After a week of behind-the-scenes squabbling between the US, the big European countries and non-aligned countries, the IAEA delivered a warning to Iran, ordering a prompt freeze of "all uranium enrichment-related activities" and threatening implicitly to report Iran to the UN security council in November should Tehran remain recalcitrant.

Iran interprets the freeze narrowly, while the Europeans and the US are calling for a suspension of all uranium enrichment processes.

Under Iran's international treaty obligations, it is allowed to enrich uranium, so any suspension has to be voluntary and cannot be compelled by outsiders.

Halting the programme, however, is the fundamental policy aim since that is the best way to ensure that Tehran does not create a nuclear bomb.

Mr Rohani indicated that Tehran remained open to negotiations on the issue and that Iran would not enrich uranium for the moment, but would carry on with ancillary operations which come under the IAEA freeze demand.

The reaction in Tehran to the IAEA calls prefigured several weeks of brinkmanship and playing for time ahead of the next meeting of the IAEA board in November.

The Americans have had enough of arguing over the Iranian programme after almost two years of inspections and reports and want to take the issue to the security council unless Iran makes major concessions.

Mr Rohani declared yesterday that Iran already had the technology to produce nuclear bombs, a view that is shared by many experts and diplomats closely following the saga.

He said production of yellow cake, a treated uranium ore, was continuing, as was the production of feed material for hundreds of sophisticated centrifuge machines used to enrich uranium.

These are some of the processes that the IAEA has demanded should be halted.

Reuters

Iran Converts Uranium in Defiance of UN

by Francois Murphy – 21 September 2004

Iran defied the United Nations on Tuesday by announcing it has begun converting a large amount of raw uranium to prepare it for enrichment, a process that can be used to develop atomic bombs.

The announcement was likely to provoke an angry reaction from Washington and increase suspicion in Israel, which plans to buy 500 "bunker buster" bombs from the United States that could take out Iran's underground atomic facilities.

Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, told reporters Iran had begun converting 37 tonnes of raw "yellowcake" uranium to process it for use in nuclear centrifuges -- the machines that enrich uranium.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, adopted a resolution on Saturday calling on Iran to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment. The United States, Russia and the European Union reinforced the message on Monday by urging Tehran to comply.

"Some of the amount of the 37 tonnes has been used. The tests have been successful but these tests have to be continued using the rest of the material," said Aghazadeh, one of Iran's vice presidents, who is attending a general conference of the Vienna-based IAEA.

One nuclear expert has said that once converted from yellowcake into uranium hexafluoride, the feed material for enrichment centrifuges, Iran would eventually be able to enrich enough uranium for up to five nuclear weapons.

The IAEA is aware of Iran's plan to convert the uranium for the enrichment process and said it would monitor the tests.

"IAEA (chief) Mohamed ElBaradei continues to call on Iran, as did the board, to suspend such a test as part of their confidence building measures," spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami said Iran was determined to press ahead with its atomic program even if it brought an end to U.N. checks of the Islamic Republic's nuclear sites.
"We are determined to obtain peaceful atomic technology even if it causes the stop of international supervision," he said.

Broken promises

They (Iran) have a continuous record of making and then breaking promises, both to the board as well as to others," a State Department official said in New York, where Secretary of State Colin Powell is attending the U.N. General Assembly.

"This is the pattern of a country that has not made the strategic decision to give up its nuclear weapons program."

Iran had promised Britain, France and Germany last October it would freeze all activities related to uranium enrichment.

But Tehran angered the EU's "big three" by announcing earlier this year that the production of feed material for centrifuges would not be included in the freeze.

The resolution said the IAEA board would consider whether "further steps" would be necessary if Iran failed to implement the suspension -- which diplomats said would mean a referral to the U.N. Security Council and possibly economic sanctions.

The United States and some other nations believe Tehran intends to use fissile material for weapons. Iran denies that and says its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

Israel has made clear it will never permit Iran, which does not recognize the right of the Jewish state to exist, to become a nuclear power.

Diplomats and analysts say Israel would prefer diplomacy to war and a coalition if military action were needed against Iran, but is ready to act alone if needed.

In June, the Pentagon said it was considering the sale to Israel of 500 BLU-109 bombs, designed to destroy reinforced targets, as part of a munitions package meant "to contribute significantly to U.S. strategic and tactical objectives."

Israeli security sources said the sale would go through and one told Reuters: "This is not the sort of ordnance needed for the Palestinian front. Bunker busters could serve Israel against Iran, or possibly Syria."

Reuters

Europe Warns Iran Against Nuclear Arms

by Carol Giacomo – 21 September 2004

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Europe warned on Tuesday that it would not tolerate an Iran with nuclear weapons after the Islamic republic defied the United Nations by announcing it had begun converting a large amount of raw uranium to prepare it for enrichment, a process that can be used to develop atomic bombs.

European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana said, however, the EU remained committed to offering energy and other cooperation if Tehran abandoned its nuclear ambitions.

Solana spoke to Reuters after a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi on the fringes of the U.N. General Assembly that was "frank ... tough and friendly."

Solana sidestepped a question about whether he felt the Iranian nuclear controversy was still open to negotiation.

"I think we have to keep on doing the utmost in talking and dialogue ... If we fail in that direction, we may have to resort to other mechanisms (such as taking the issue to the U.N. Security Council but) we prefer not to have to," he said.

Iran's announcement on Tuesday came just three days after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, adopted a resolution calling on Iran to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment.

Iran had promised Britain, France and Germany last October it would freeze all activities related to uranium enrichment.

But Tehran angered the EU's "big three" by reneging on that commitment.

The United States and some other nations believe Tehran intends to use fissile material for weapons. Iran denies that and says its nuclear program is solely for peaceful purposes.

The IAEA, which has been probing Iran's nuclear program for two years, has found many previously concealed activities that could be used in weapons production, but no "smoking gun."

Washington believes the resolution passed by the IAEA on Saturday opened the door to tough action by the IAEA board when it meets again in November -- namely, a referral of Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council and possibly economic sanctions.

Solana, in a telephone interview, said he told Kharrazi "in a very clear manner that they had to comply with the (IAEA) report ... and that we will not tolerate that Iran will have nuclear weapons, potentially nuclear weapons."

He described the meeting as "tough and friendly at the same time because we want to maintain a friendly attitude" with Iran.

The IAEA set a fixed period -- the November meeting -- "to clarify the position of Iran (and) we have to use this period to get everybody convinced .. They have to convince us and generate trust that what they are saying is the truth," Solana said.

He said he told Kharrazi "if you don't want to go in the direction of having the capability of nuclear weapons, we can start talking about so many things. The possibilities of dialogue and cooperation between the EU and other countries with Iran are very many," he said.

He declined to say if he thought the United States, which has not had diplomatic relations with Tehran since the 1979 Iranian revolution, should engage in dialogue.

President Bush has refused to negotiate with Iran on the nuclear issue, but Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry has said he would be willing to talk with Tehran about some kind of a deal.

Tehran Times

Iran nuclear talks still open: ElBaradei

21 September 2004

WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency held out hope Sunday that inspectors may not have reached an impasse with Iran on its nuclear program.

On Saturday, the IAEA called on Iran to clarify outstanding issues related to its nuclear program by November 25, the date of its next scheduled meeting, and to freeze all work on enrichment and centrifuges.

That brought this apparent rebuff Sunday from Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rowhani: "In Iran's opinion, the demand of IAEA is illegal and cannot bring new obligations for Iran. "It means that the IAEA board of governors has not the right to oblige a country to suspend its activities."

But the IAEA's soft-spoken Mohamed ElBaradei refused to take the bait.

"I'm not sure Iran, reading what Iran have stated today, they have rejected it," he told CNN's Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, from IAEA headquarters in Vienna. "They have said it is not a legal obligation, but it is a confidence-building measure. I take that to be correct. I mean, the board said this is a confidence-building measure. We should not really tinker around about legalities."

ElBaradei said time remained for negotiation. "I'm supposed to present a report by the end of November to our governing board, so I still have couple of months."

ElBaradei said he did not consider Iran's nuclear program to represent an immediate threat. "It's really a question of intention," he said.

Rowhani said Iran has already volunteered to suspend the last stage of enrichment -- and would continue that suspension -- but would not halt its production of enriched uranium.

Enrichment is legal under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Dawn

World powers ask Iran to halt enrichment

21 September 2004

VIENNA: The United States, the European Union and Russia urged Iran on Monday to comply with the UN nuclear watchdog's demand that it halt all activities linked to uranium enrichment, after Tehran rejected the call.

But Iran stood by its position, making clear it would not allow any outside interference in its nuclear activities. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) unanimously adopted a resolution on Saturday calling on Iran to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment, a process that can be used to build an atom bomb.

But on Sunday, Iran's chief nuclear negotiator Hassan Rohani rejected the demand in the resolution, sponsored by Britain, France and Germany, and threatened to end snap checks of atomic facilities if the case was sent to the UN Security Council.

Uranium enrichment, which at a low level can be used to fuel nuclear power plants, is permitted under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). But US Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham told a meeting of IAEA members that Iran has been violating its obligations under the NPT for almost two decades by concealing its enrichment programme.

It had been "secretly building sensitive nuclear fuel cycle facilities and doing so for weapons purposes," he said. "It is essential that Iran now cooperate fully and immediately with the IAEA's requests."

The Dutch delegation chief told the meeting on behalf of the EU that the bloc "calls on Iran to heed the content of the resolution adopted by last week's (IAEA) board of governors, in particular with regard to the necessity to suspend fully all its enrichment-related activities".

The EU's "big three" powers have been trying since last year to persuade Iran to abandon its enrichment programme, which the United States and some other countries believe Tehran intends to use to make fissile material for weapons.

Iran denies that and says its nuclear programme is for the peaceful generation of electricity. Dutch ambassador Justus de Visser said of the IAEA's investigation of Iran's nuclear programme: "It is a matter of serious concern that a number of issues after two years still await clarification."

Russian call

In Moscow, the Russian Foreign Ministry issued a similar statement. "Tehran has been urged to re-impose a moratorium on all uranium enrichment activities. We back this call," it said.

Russia, which normally steers clear of political debate over Iran, is helping Tehran build a nuclear reactor at the port of Bushehr despite strong pressure from the United States.

Iran remained defiant, however. "Our great nation will not permit any interference and/or interruption in our purely peaceful and indigenous nuclear programme and it will not give (it) up at any price," Gholamreza Aghazadeh, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation and a vice president of his country, told the meeting.

The IAEA, which has been probing Iran's nuclear programme for two years, has found many previously concealed activities that could be used in a weapons programme, but no "smoking gun" that would confirm US suspicions.

Washington believes Saturday's resolution opened the door to tough action by the IAEA board when it meets again in November - namely, a referral of Iran's case to the Security Council and possibly economic sanctions.

New York Times

Bush Aides Divided on Confronting Iran Over A-Bomb

by Steven R. Weisman – 21 September 2004

WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 - At a time when the violent insurgency in Iraq is vexing the Bush administration and stirring worries among Americans, events may be propelling the United States into yet another confrontation, this time with Iran. The issues have an almost eerie familiarity, evoking the warnings and threats that led to the war to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and stirring an equally passionate debate.

Like Iraq in its final years under Saddam Hussein, Iran is believed by experts to be on the verge of developing a nuclear bomb. In Iraq, that proved to be untrue, though this time the consensus is much stronger among Western experts.

In addition, as with Iraq, administration officials have said recently that Iran is supporting insurgencies and terrorism in other countries. Recently, top administration officials have accused the Tehran government of backing the rebels in Iraq, something that officials fear could increase if Iran is pressed too hard on its nuclear program.

A parallel concern in Washington is Iran's continued backing of Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite group that the administration and the Israeli government say is channeling aid to groups attacking Israeli civilians. Israel also warns that Iran's nuclear program will reach a "point of no return" next year, after which it will be able to make a bomb without any outside assistance.

The Bush administration has yet to forge a clear strategy on how to deal with Iran, partly because of a lack of attractive options and partly because there is a debate under way between hard-liners and advocates of diplomatic engagement. But in another similarity with the Iraq situation before the war, Washington is in considerable disagreement with key allies over how to handle the threat.

Britain, France and Germany say Iran's nuclear program is unacceptable, but they also warn that a confrontation could backfire and that incentives as well as punishments need to be presented to Tehran. Threatening sanctions - a cutoff in oil purchases, for example - is not viewed as credible or likely to get much support, they say.

European views cannot be dismissed, especially after the discord over Iraq, administration officials say. Last weekend, under European pressure, the United States agreed to defer its demand that the International Atomic Energy Agency immediately refer Iran's noncooperation on nuclear issues to the United Nations Security Council, where sanctions might be considered. Instead, Iran was given two more months to show that it was cooperating.

Still, even Secretary of State Colin L. Powell, the leading advocate of diplomacy in Mr. Bush's inner circle, cites a gathering threat from Iran.

"Diplomacy does not mean failure to look in the lion's mouth," Mr. Powell said in a recent interview. "Diplomacy doesn't mean pretending something isn't there when it's there. The Iranians have a nuclear weapons program, and I keep telling everybody it is the responsibility of the international community to apply all the pressure we can."

With Iran policy in a state of flux, there is a drive among conservatives to reach out to Iranian dissidents and exiles seeking to overthrow the government, much as efforts were made with Iraqis in the 1990's. Senator Rick Santorum, a Pennsylvania Republican, is sponsoring legislation favoring "regime change," with what some say is the tacit backing of administration conservatives.

Last year, when it was trying to reach out to Tehran for cooperation on Iraq, the administration stated that it did not support regime change in Iran, though President Bush also spoke out in favor of greater democracy there.

Administration officials say that there was an internal debate last year but that the idea of giving aid to dissidents who might try to overthrow the Iranian government had been dropped for lack of any credible groups to support.

Yet the cause of regime change in Iran is expected to be revived if President Bush is re-elected, administration officials say. Leading the charge is John R. Bolton, the under secretary of state for nonproliferation, who gave a speech last month saying that Iran's conduct did not "bode well for the success of a negotiated approach to dealing with this issue." A colleague called him "the self-appointed tip of the spear" in the discussions.

In an interview, Mr. Bolton declined to comment on whether regime change was appropriate for Iran, other than to say that even without outside support, widespread unhappiness among Iranians over a lagging economy and stifling religious rule could bring a "revolution from below."

"When the old regime in South Africa collapsed they got rid of their nukes," Mr. Bolton said. "When Ukraine became independent they did the same. At a time of profound dislocation, it is not inconceivable that a new government in Tehran might be persuaded to drop its nuclear program."

On the other side of the spectrum, some at the State Department say no solution is possible without a discussion of benefits to the Tehran government if it changes its behavior, or without progress in the impasse between Israel and the Palestinians.

Some experts call for a "grand bargain" that would involve an across-the-board agreement in which changed behavior by Tehran on all fronts would be negotiated in return for normal relations and investment from the West.

Still other experts say that such an approach is overly ambitious and that "selective engagement" on a few crucial issues, including steps to stabilize Iraq, should be tried first. That view is advocated by a Council on Foreign Relations committee led by Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, and Robert M. Gates, a director of central intelligence in the early 1990's.

In three and a half years the Bush administration has tried engaging Iran, but little has come of its efforts. Diplomatic contacts at low levels were suspended in May of last year. Senator John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate, is charging the Bush administration with ignoring the Iran problem. Mr. Kerry said last month that the United States "must work with our allies to end Iran's nuclear weapons program and be ready to work with them to implement a range of tougher measures if needed."

For all the talk about new policies, few administration officials or policy makers and experts outside the administration think that any new approach will be unveiled soon.

A final unpredictable factor in the discussions involves Israel, which some intelligence experts say would be willing to strike one or more Iranian weapons sites, as it did with the French-built nuclear reactor in Iraq in 1981.

Israeli and American officials insist that the idea of a strike against Iranian sites is impractical. Nevertheless, some diplomats were rattled by a recent warning from Iran's defense minister, Vice Adm. Ali Shamkhani, that Iran would retaliate if Israel tried any such thing.

"I'm frankly very pessimistic about the future," said Patrick Clawson, deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near Eastern Policy. "We have to offer a carrot as well as brandishing a stick. But this administration is too busy and they don't want to think about it. I don't think very much is going to happen until after the American election."

Reuters

Eyeing Iran Reactors, Israel Seeks U.S. Bunker Bombs

by Dan Williams – 21 September 2004

JERUSALEM (Reuters) - The United States plans to sell Israel \$319 million worth of air-launched bombs, including 500 "bunker busters" able to penetrate Iran's underground nuclear facilities, Israeli security sources said on Tuesday.

The Haaretz newspaper quoted a Pentagon report as saying the planned procurement sought "to maintain Israel's qualitative advantage and advance U.S. strategic and tactical interests."

The U.S. embassy in Israel had no comment, referring queries to Washington. Israel's Defense Ministry also declined comment.

But a senior Israeli security source who confirmed the Haaretz story told Reuters: "This is not the sort of ordnance needed for the Palestinian front. Bunker busters could serve Israel against Iran, or possibly Syria."

Haaretz quoted Israeli government sources as saying the sale, including 4,500 other guided munitions, was not expected to go through until after the U.S. elections in November. Earlier this month, Haaretz said Israel sought to obtain the U.S.-made, one-ton "bunker buster" bombs for a possible future strike against arch-foe Iran's atomic development program, which the Jewish state considers a strategic threat.

"This relationship has a long history. The United States has given Israel more advanced weapons than this," a spokesman for Iran's Defense Ministry said.

"This could be psychological warfare to test us," he added.

Tehran denies hostile designs, saying its nuclear program has peaceful purposes only. This week, it rejected international calls to comply with a U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency demand that it halt all uranium-enrichment activities.

Among the nuclear facilities that Iran has declared are uranium mines near the city of Yazd, and a uranium-enrichment plant in Natanz incorporating large underground buildings that could accommodate thousands of gas centrifuges.

Western diplomats accuse Iran of having several undeclared facilities close to Tehran thought to be related to uranium enrichment, a process the United States and some other countries believe Tehran will use to produce fissile material for weapons.

The exiled Iranian opposition group known as the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) says Iran is constructing numerous secret facilities under its Defense Ministry.

Diplomacy still seen as preferable

Known by the military designations GBU-27 or GBU-28, "bunker busters" are guided by lasers or satellites and can penetrate up to 30 feet of earth and concrete. Israel may already have some of the bombs for its U.S.-supplied F-15 fighter jets.

"As they are part of the weapon set for the F-15, I would assume them to be in place," said Robert Hewson, editor of Jane's Air-Launched Weapons. He said the bombs proved effective in the 1991 Gulf war and 1990s NATO strikes on Serbian forces.

Israel, which is widely assumed to be the Middle East's only nuclear-armed nation, wants to stop Iran going atomic, but officials say diplomatic pressure on Tehran is the best method.

Many believe a military strike, especially by Israel, could kill off any chance of a diplomatic resolution or efforts by Iranian opposition groups to achieve internal reform.

"I think (military action) should be a last, last, last resort. Unlike Iraq and North Korea, there is at least some chance of bringing about an undermining of the Velayat-e Faqih's authority," former CIA director R. James Woolsey told Reuters this month, referring to Iran's ruling Islamic clerics.

Convinced Saddam Hussein was developing nuclear weapons, Israel bombed Iraq's Osiraq reactor in 1981. While the move drew international censure, eventually many U.S. experts saw it as an important blow to Saddam's strategic weapons capabilities.

"The response of the United States was, unfortunately, negative with respect to Osiraq," Woolsey said. "The Israelis were right and everybody else was wrong, including us, in 1981."

The Osiraq strike did not stop Saddam's quest for the bomb. Instead, Iraq went underground and worked in secret until the program was uncovered by the U.N. nuclear watchdog in 1991.

Associated Press

'Iraq-Style' U.N. Plan Not Sought for Iran

by George Gedda – 22 September 2004

WASHINGTON - The Bush administration has no plans to seek an "Iraq-style" U.N. Security Council resolution on Iran if it succeeds in efforts to have the council address that country's nuclear activities.

A senior State Department official said Wednesday there is a widespread misconception that the administration wants the same type of resolution for Iran as the one which led to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq last year.

If the council takes up the Iran question, the administration would seek a resolution calling for a suspension of uranium enrichment activity by Iran, much as the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency has done repeatedly, the official said.

The official briefed reporters on the condition that he not be identified.

For almost a year, the administration has been asking the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency to refer Iran's nuclear activities to the council.

Thus far, the IAEA board has declined to do so. It will address the issue again on Nov. 25.

The administration believes that Iran is developing a uranium-based nuclear weapons capability and rejects Tehran's contention that its program is aimed solely at generating electricity.

American concerns about Iran's program were reinforced on Tuesday when an Iranian official disclosed that work has begun on converting raw uranium into the gas needed for enrichment, a process that can be used to produce highly enriched uranium suitable for use in a nuclear weapon.

Secretary of State Colin Powell in New York this week for the U.N. General Assembly, said in response to a question that he is not aware of any plans to attack Iran. But he added that the military option "remains on the table."

"I think there's a clear understanding now that Iran must satisfy the concerns that have been expressed by the international community by the time of the November meeting," Powell said.

If Iran doesn't cooperate, he said "there will be every reason at that point to send the matter on to the Security Council."

For the time being, Powell said, the United States is relying on diplomacy "to stop this movement on the part of the Iranians toward a nuclear weapon."

Khaleej Times

Iran warns of most severe reaction in case of Israeli attack

23 September 2004

UNITED NATIONS - Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi warned on Wednesday his country would react "most severely" to any Israeli strike against its nuclear facilities.

"Israel is always a threat not only against Iran, but all countries in the Middle East," Kharazi said after talks here with his British counterpart, Jack Straw. "Be sure that any action by Israel certainly will be reacted by us most severely."

Kharazi said he had "a very good discussion" with Straw on the nuclear issue as well as relations between the two countries.

Britain, along with France and Germany, has been pressing Tehran to provide guarantees that its nuclear program would not be turned into a quest for nuclear weapons.

"I believe there are concerns on all sides," the Iranian minister said. "There are concerns on the European side, and we have to arrive to some conclusions that will be acceptable to both sides to overcome this impasse."

He said he believed there were "ways and means how to make both sides happy," but added, "Nobody can deny our right, which is using nuclear technology for peaceful purposes."

Straw did not make a statement at the end of the talks.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has given Iran until November 25 to provide assurances that its nuclear program has no secret military aspects.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said earlier on Wednesday that the United States had no plans to attack Iran to thwart what it claims is the Islamic republic's pursuit of nuclear weapons, but has not formally ruled out any options to deal with the matter.

Reuters

Iran Says Talks Only Way to Resolve Nuke Standoff

23 September 2004

TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iran said Thursday dialogue was the only way to resolve an international standoff over the Islamic republic's nuclear program which Washington says is a cover for building atomic weapons.

Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said Iran had no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons and was ready to remove concerns over its nuclear dossier, state television reported.

"The only way to resolve Iran's nuclear issue is through dialogue, not pressuring Tehran," Kharrazi told Iran's state television at the United Nations.

"Nobody can force a powerful country like Iran to abandon its right of peaceful nuclear technology," Kharrazi added.

Iran rejected a resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) calling on the country to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment, a process that can be used to build an atom bomb.

Washington says Iran plans to use enriched uranium to develop nuclear weapons. Iran rejects the charge, saying its nuclear program is dedicated solely to generating electricity.

The United States, European Union and Russia have urged Iran to comply with the IAEA demand and suspend its uranium enrichment.

President Mohammad Khatami Wednesday said Iran was willing to forsake U.N. supervision and go it alone on its nuclear program in case of mounting international pressure.

Iran said it has begun converting 37 tons of raw "yellowcake" uranium to process it for use in centrifuges, which experts say this could eventually yield enough material for five nuclear warheads.

Asia Times

Iran asks the world to nuclear party

by Safa Haeri – 23 September 2004

VIENNA - As it becomes increasingly cornered over its nuclear program, Iran has come out fighting, issuing an open invitation to countries to participate in the construction of its nuclear-powered plants.

"Not only do we invite you, we also welcome whole-heartedly countries to invest in our nuclear program for civilian purposes," Mohammad Hossein Mousavian, the secretary of the political department of Iran's Supreme Council on National Security (SCNS), told Asia Times Online.

Mousavian, the right-hand man of Hasan Rohani, the powerful secretary of the SCNS and Iran's top nuclear negotiator with both the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the European Union's so-called Big 3 (Germany, France and the United Kingdom), described the offer as "an exceptional and historical occasion" that is open to France and Germany in particular, as well as Britain and the United States if they wish to invest in Iran.

Iran has a stated aim of having 7,000 megawatts of nuclear power online by 2020, accounting for 10% of the country's power-generation capacity at that point. To achieve this, it plans to build at least six more plants besides the one under construction in the port of Bushehr, on the Persian Gulf, with assistance from Russia. This plant will consist of a 1,000MW pressurized-light-water reactor and is scheduled to go online in 2005.

However, Iran's determination to act on what it calls its "legal right" to produce fissile uranium for nuclear energy has put it at odds with much of the world community, especially the US, which suspects that the country is determined to develop a nuclear bomb.

Iran's call for countries to invest in huge, multibillion-dollar nuclear projects goes first to France and Germany because these two nations are already familiar with Iran's nuclear market, as Germany was almost finished building Iran's first nuclear-powered plant and France had started building two others in the oil-rich province of Khuzistan when the Islamic Revolution of 1979 halted them.

Speaking to Asia Times Online in Vienna on the sidelines of the latest meeting of the IAEA's board of directors on the question of Iranian nuclear programs, Mousavian said that besides inviting the West's main exporters of nuclear plants to take a "substantial part" in Iran's nuclear projects, Tehran is also ready to offer them a "golden package" that would include full cooperation in fighting international terrorism and restoring peace and security in the region, as well as in trade and investment.

Analysts say that should the West, mostly Europe, not respond to Iran's offer, the likelihood is that Russia will consolidate its position in the country, adding to the \$1 billion deal it already has at the Bushehr plant.

"Obviously, the Iranians are not very happy with Russian nuclear technology, which they consider aging and dangerous. At the same time, they are determined to go ahead with the project - they are looking to diversify their sources of energy through nuclear plants for electricity. Hence their call to France and Germany to take the opportunity," an Iranian analyst explained to Asia Times Online on condition of not being named.

According to Mousavian, a career diplomat, a country that has such an extremely important nuclear project cannot depend on foreign countries for the fuel needed for its atomic reactors. Hence Iran's determination to master the full cycle of enriching uranium, which is an essential step in the production of nuclear fuel.

But for the Iranian analyst, "the matter is of high importance for Iran because once this technology is fully mastered, it changes its stature in the region, particularly facing the Arabs and the Turks".

But what about Israel, which already has the bomb?

"Israel is a political enemy with which we don't have a border. But Arabs don't like us. See what they write in their papers," he explained, referring to a recent article in the Saudi English-language Arab News in which veteran journalist Abdul Rahman al-Rashid alleged that Iran's efforts to become a nuclear power were aimed at the Arabs, not Israelis:

Iran does not share borders with Israel and has had no hostile contact with it. It is only supporting forces that fight Israel. Its developed weapons cannot be sent to these parties to fight Israel. Then who are the targets of these sophisticated weapons? There is only one logical answer: neighboring countries. And they are already paying the cost. They are the ones scared by Iran's race to build weapons. They don't scare Israel.

On Tuesday, Iranian President Mohammad Khatami warned the international community that Iran is ready to end its cooperation with the IAEA if the United Nations nuclear watchdog refuses it access to nuclear technology for civilian purposes.

"The international community has to acknowledge our natural and legal right and open the path for understanding ... so we can accept comprehensive international supervision and we can continue our path to acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes," the president said, warning that "otherwise we will continue on this path even if the result is the cutting off of international supervision".

He was referring to the latest resolution passed on the weekend by the 35 members of the Vienna-based IAEA calling on Iran to stop all its uranium-enriching activities and ratify the Additional Protocol to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

However, the resolution, approved unanimously but without vote-taking after days of intense, behind-closed-doors debates between delegates from the UK, France and Germany and members of the Non-Aligned Movement on the one hand and the United States on the other, did not mention US proposals for giving Iran an October 31 deadline and a "trigger mechanism" aimed at the issue being referred automatically to the UN Security Council for strong economic sanctions.

Addressing a parade marking the beginning of "Sacred Defense Week" for the anniversary of the outbreak of war with Iraq in 1980, Khatami said, "We have made our choice and it is now the turn of others to choose," a reference to the IAEA, which gave Iran until November to come clean on its nuclear intentions and ratify the Additional Protocol, which allows for a more aggressive IAEA inspection regime. A clause in the NPT permits any country to withdraw on three months' notice. North Korea withdrew in 2001, allowing it to proceed with the separation of plutonium from spent uranium and presumably the development of a nuclear bomb.

However, Khatami assured that Iran was not after making nuclear weapons. "If we are under supervision or not, we will in no way try to acquire nuclear weapons because it is against our religion and culture. We are opposed to nuclear weapons," he said.

Analysts said that while the president's warnings on the IAEA might be for domestic consumption, it was the declaration of vice president and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Gholam-Reza Aqazadeh, that sent alarm bells ringing in Washington, Israel, the EU and the IAEA.

"Some of the amount of the 37 tons has been used," Aqazadeh told journalists before the IAEA meeting, referring to a quantity of yellowcake, or uranium oxide, which Iran had earlier indicated it planned to convert into uranium hexafluoride gas, the feedstock for enriched uranium. This uranium gas is enriched by being fed into supersonic centrifuges, a process that Iran says it has begun in defiance of IAEA warnings.

"The tests have been successful but these tests have to be continued using the rest of the material," Aqazadeh said, adding that although Iran does not accept the latest resolution of the agency's directors, it will continue to be fully open to inspections.

In a brief edict issued eight years ago to the Revolutionary Guards, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who in his capacity as the leader of the Islamic Republic is also the overall commander of the

Iranian armed forces, banned the use of mass destruction weapons, most particularly the chemical and biological arms that Iraq had deployed extensively against Iranian soldiers during the 1980-88 war. Highly informed Iranian experts canvassed by Asia Times Online say that contrary to some Western and Israeli science and intelligence sources that put Iran two to five years from the atomic bomb, it would take the country about 10 years to make its first nuclear weapon. "To produce an atomic bomb, one needs more than 64,000 modern centrifuges running together with much other equipment 24 hours a day, but to our knowledge, Iran has but 164 pilot centrifuges," one expert said, speaking on condition of not being named. Nevertheless, the Americans and Israelis, in particular, insist that the ruling ayatollahs' main goal is to divert their nuclear technology to developing an atomic bomb for use against the Jewish state. Some years ago, Ayatollah Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former president who is still the second-most influential man in Iran's clerical-ruled republic after Khamenei, proposed that Muslim nations drop an atomic bomb over Israel. More recently, Hoseyn Shariatmadari, a high-ranking intelligence officer appointed as the editor of the evening daily Keyhan, threatened Israel with trained suicide squads, which he described as "Iran's most devastating weapon". "Israel knows well that in case it makes the slightest mistake, it would face a catastrophe the likes of which it has never seen in its short life," said Shariatmadari, adding, "They [Israelis] have not yet faced our volunteers to martyrdom, a force that is much more devastating than anything one can imagine."

In an interview this month with the Qatari television station Aljazeera, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, the Iranian defense minister, quoted high-ranking officers as suggesting preemptive strikes against Israel and US forces in the Persian Gulf. "We will not sit [with arms folded] to wait for what others will do to us. Some military commanders in Iran are convinced that preventive operations, which the Americans talk about, are not their [US] monopoly," Shamkhani warned in the interview when asked about the possibility of a US or Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

A day before, acting Revolutionary Guards commander General Mohammad Baqer Zolqadr stated that in the event of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, Israel's nuclear site would be next. "If Israel fires one missile at the Bushehr atomic power plant it should permanently forget about the Dimona nuclear center, where it produces and keeps its nuclear weapons, and Israel would be responsible for the terrifying consequence of this move."

A banner at Tuesday's military parade stating "Israel must be wiped off the map" was draped on the side of a Shahab-2 missile, while a banner saying "We will crush America under our feet" was on the side of a trailer carrying the latest Shahab-3 missile, correspondents reported from the Iranian capital, Tehran. The Shahab-2 missile, whose name means "meteor" or "shooting star" in Farsi, is thought to be capable of carrying a one-tonne warhead at least 1,300 kilometers, well within range of Israel. "The Shahab-3 missiles, with different ranges, enable us to destroy the most distant targets," said an official commentary accompanying the parade, which was carried live on state television.

Against this background, the Israeli liberal newspaper Ha'aretz reported on Tuesday that Israel is to buy some 500 "bunker buster" bombs from the US in a deal worth \$139 million. Though Ha'aretz said Israel has similar weapons already, which it has used against Palestinian extremists in Gaza, the British news agency Reuters quoted unnamed official sources as saying the bombs could be used to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. "This is not the sort of ordnance needed for the Palestinian front. Bunker busters could serve Israel against Iran or possibly Syria," Reuters quoted official sources as saying.

Known by the military designations GBU-27 or GBU-28, bunker busters are guided by lasers or satellites and can penetrate up to 10 meters of earth and concrete. Israel may already have some of the bombs for its US-supplied F-15 fighter jets. The Pentagon told Congress that the bombs were meant to maintain Israel's qualitative advantage, and advance US strategic and tactical interests.

Israel regards Iran as its greatest strategic enemy and has issued thinly veiled threats of military action to try to stop Tehran's nuclear program if diplomatic efforts fail. According to US experts, Israel can and is planning to repeat against Iran's nuclear facilities the early 1981 operation of its air force that destroyed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor, which was under construction by French companies.

But many experts and intelligence agencies, including Israel's Mossad, have their doubts on the feasibility of such a strike. With Osirak in mind, the Iranians have dispersed their facilities throughout the country. "The fact is that in that case [Osirak], Israel had all the plans and benefited from the ongoing Iran-Iraq war. But the revolution of 1979 ended the American and Israeli presence in Iran, and today one can assume for sure that the American and Israeli intelligence on Iran is next to zero," Reuters quoted the source as saying.

To assure that Iran has no hostile intentions with its nuclear projects, Mousavian, a former ambassador to Germany, proposed that the IAEA install sophisticated equipment in Iran that keeps uranium-enriching activities at a "soft" 3.5%.¹ "The agency has this material and we invite it to install it at all our facilities and keep them under their constant inspection," Mousavian said.

Note: 1. Most present-day reactors (light-water reactors) use enriched uranium where the proportion of the U-235 isotope has been increased from 0.7% to about 3% or up to 5%. For comparison, uranium used for nuclear weapons would have to be enriched in plants specially designed to produce at least 90% U-235.

New York Times

Iran's Plans for Nuclear Fuel Widen Global Rift Over Technology

by Craig S. Smith – 23 September 2004

PARIS, Sept. 22 - Iran reiterated its right on Wednesday to produce uranium fuel for nuclear energy, seizing on a rift between nuclear-weapon nations that want to slow the spread of such technology and developing countries that see the technology as the entitlement of every signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

"This right is enshrined in the nonproliferation treaty and we will not give it up," Iran's president, Mohammad Khatami, told reporters after a cabinet meeting in Tehran, according to Agence France-Presse. He promised full cooperation with the nonproliferation program if that right is internationally recognized.

Iran has been battling a coalition of countries, led by the United States, that want to stop it from developing its nuclear capabilities, fearing that it intends to use the technology to produce weapons. But the United States has met stiff resistance from some of the 35 countries on the board of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency.

Those countries contend that the treaty has become a tool of nuclear states to impede nuclear development in nations they mistrust and has lost its original purpose. The original purpose was to encourage a system under which countries without nuclear weapons that signed the treaty were promised full support in developing other nuclear technologies in exchange for renouncing nuclear weapons.

The debate over Iran's right to produce nuclear fuel, which could be diverted to make nuclear weapons, has widened the rift.

Many developing countries concede that Iran may be using loopholes in the treaty to develop nuclear weapons. But they argue that inequities in the nonproliferation program are undermining efforts to close those loopholes.

Iran has sought to exploit frustration among developing countries with the one-sided nature of compliance with the treaty.

"There is clearly a double standard," Hossein Mousavian, an official at Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said last week in Vienna. He argued that Iran was being unfairly penalized while Israel, an I.A.E.A. member that is presumed to have nuclear weapons, had never signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty or accepted inspections.

Concerns about a double standard delayed an agency resolution on Iran last week. The agency's board finally passed a resolution censuring Iran on Saturday. But several European and developing countries read statements making clear that the resolution, which called on Iran to suspend its nuclear fuel activities, was neither legally binding nor could be used as a precedent for similar actions against other members, according to a Western diplomat who attended the meeting.

Iran is evidently hoping that this division has given it room to maneuver before Nov. 25, when the agency will review Iran's case and decide on further action. The United States is pushing for the agency to referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council for having enriched uranium without notifying the agency.

Iran voluntarily stopped enriching uranium last year as a gesture of good faith while the I.A.E.A. investigated its nuclear activities, which were largely hidden until 2002. But the country has insisted that the suspension is temporary.

On Tuesday, Iran said it had begun converting 40 tons of uranium oxide into uranium hexafluoride gas, the feedstock for enriched uranium. While it has not yet resumed enrichment of the gas by feeding it into supersonic centrifuges, President Khatami has said it intends to do so.