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SPEECHES

Iran's Nuclear Program: What Threat Does It Pose?

Remarks by Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte
U.S. Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations in Vienna

Nobel Institute
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I am here today to discuss to discuss a dark subject: the threat posed by Iran's nuclear pursuits as well as our concerns about Syria's clandestine nuclear activities.

But let me start on a more positive note.

Two historic events took place last weekend.

First, Norway and the United States joined the other members of the 45-country Nuclear Suppliers Group in agreeing to allow civil nuclear cooperation with India.

This was an important and positive decision for all of our relations with India and for India's relationship with the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime.

This decision helps India meet its growing energy needs with less greenhouse gas.

This decision brings India into the mainstream of our efforts to avert the spread of nuclear weapons.

Second, Secretary Rice went to Libya.

Her visit was the first by a U.S. Secretary of State since 1953.

As the Secretary said, "this demonstrates that the United States has no permanent enemies."

Instead, as she explained, "when countries are prepared to make strategic changes in direction, the United States is prepared to respond."

What do these positive developments mean for the subject of today's discussion?

They mean that concerted international diplomacy can succeed in bolstering the world's efforts to confront the

dangers posed by nuclear weapons.

We also hope the weekend's developments send a clear message to Tehran and Damascus:

Meet your obligations. Act to build confidence. This is the way to earn the world's respect and cooperation.

The Dangerous Pursuits of Two Dangerous Regimes

In two weeks, the IAEA Board of Governors will meet.

Among other items on our agenda, we will consider the nuclear activities of Iran and Syria.

Iran and Syria are two IAEA members who have violated their IAEA obligations.

They are two dangerous regimes on dangerous pursuits.

- Both are state sponsors of terrorism.
- Both are opponents of regional peace and stability.
- Both have pursued nuclear capabilities that make no civil sense but that can produce fissile material for nuclear weapons.
- Both had outside assistance, Syria from a known nuclear violator, Iran from an international smuggling network for nuclear weapons technology.
- Both pursued these capabilities covertly and illicitly, successfully hiding them from IAEA inspectors until exposed by others.
- Both remain actively engaged in covering up the full extent of their activities.

This dangerous situation poses serious risks to the security of Norway and the United States, Europe and NATO.

- Iran's nuclear pursuits remain the most threatening.
- But Syria's clandestine activities show how a determined regime can flout the IAEA.
- Each underscores the risks of nuclear proliferation in one of the world's most dangerous regions.

Syria's Covert Nuclear Activities

Syria's covert nuclear activities were exposed last April when we briefed your government and others on the construction of a nuclear reactor in the eastern desert of Syria.

This was not a typical reactor that a country might build for medical research or power production.

Instead, our intelligence experts are confident that the Syrian reactor was built with the assistance of North Korea and was of the same type that North Korea built at Yongbyon to produce plutonium for its nuclear weapons.

We have good reason to believe that Syria's reactor, like North Korea's, was not intended for peaceful purposes.

- First, we assess the Syrian reactor was configured to produce plutonium.

It had no capability to generate electricity and was ill-suited for peaceful research.

- Second, Syria went to great pains to keep the facility secret.

It located the reactor in the remote desert.

It built earthen berms and fake walls to hide it from observation.

It hid the pipelines bringing cooling water to and from the Euphrates.

It did not declare the reactor to the IAEA as required by Code 3.1 of its safeguard agreement.

- Third, Syria went to great lengths to cover up its activities after a military strike destroyed the reactor one year ago.

While putting off IAEA requests to visit the site, Syrian engineers hauled away incriminating equipment, buried what remained of the reactor, and built a large structure over the top.

Under mounting pressure at our Board meeting in June, Syria eventually allowed IAEA inspectors to visit the reactor site.

But the IAEA inspectors also did what IAEA inspectors do well:

They gathered information from multiple sources, they asked for additional access, and they probing questions.

Syria allowed one visit but has yet to provide the full access and information that the inspectors have requested.

Whether in the Board room in June, or with IAEA inspectors since, Syria is using stalling tactics striking similar to those of Iran.

Instead of looking to Iran, Syria should follow the example of Libya.

Now that it has been caught, Syria should admit its illicit nuclear activities and give IAEA inspectors the necessary information and access to assure the world they have stopped.

It is time for disclosure, not continuing deception.

The Proliferation Threat Posed by Iran

Iran's leaders also pursued covert nuclear activities which they, like Syria, must still fully disclose.

There are three aspects to a nuclear weapons program:

- weaponization -- meaning the design of the actual weapon and its fitting to a delivery system;
- production of the necessary fissile material -- highly enriched uranium or weapons-usable plutonium;
- deployment of an effective means of delivery.

Iran has made significant progress on all three.

The U.S. Intelligence Community judges, with high confidence, that Iran was working until late 2003 on design and weaponization of a nuclear device.

This was no hobby shop activity or academic pursuit.

This was a concerted, covert program, conducted by military entities, under the direction of Iran's senior leaders.

Our Intelligence Community assesses that Iran's leaders quietly halted this work in 2003 after the exposure of other nuclear activities.

This is good news.

But the bad news is that the work on weaponization was "put on the shelf" and could easily be resumed.

Just as the IAEA did not detect these activities before they were halted, there is no assurance that the IAEA could detect their resumption.

In the meantime, Iran is pursuing capabilities to enrich uranium and produce plutonium in violation of multiple resolutions of the UN Security Council.

Furthest developed is Iran's capability to enrich uranium with centrifuge technology.

Iran's efforts are based on material and knowhow smuggled to Iran by the A. Q. Khan network.

The Khan network was not a purveyor of civil nuclear technology.

Countries like North Korea and Libya turned to Khan when they wanted a bomb.

Today Iran boasts its is operating 4,000 to 6,000 centrifuges in underground bunkers at Natanz.

As it masters this technology, Iran could "break out" of its treaty obligations and reconfigure the centrifuges at Natanz to produce highly enriched uranium for nuclear weapons.

Alternatively, and more worrisome, Iran could install similar centrifuges at a covert facility using the activities at Natanz to provide helpful "cover".

Indeed, Iran announced earlier this year that it would not give the IAEA early notice of new nuclear facilities, despite an obligation to do so under Code 3.1 of its safeguards agreement.

Ironically, this is the same Code 3.1 that Syria violated in building its reactor without informing the IAEA.

Iran claims that it is developing an enrichment capability in order to produce nuclear fuel for power reactors.

But there is a major problem with this story: Iran has no functioning power reactors.

The one reactor under construction, at Bushehr, has received the necessary fuel from Russia as part of a ten-year contract that can be extended for the lifetime of the reactor.

Iran also claims that uranium enrichment is part of its quest for energy self-sufficiency.

But this story is also problematic:

Iran does not have sufficient uranium deposits to produce fuel for even a small number of reactors.

It does, however, have enough for a sizeable stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Assuming Iran proceeds to build a nuclear weapon, effective delivery won't be a problem.

Iran already has the Shahab-3 missile with a range of 1300 kilometers that could strike Israel and most of the Middle East.

Iran also claims to be developing missiles of longer range that could reach deeper into Europe, Russia, and China.

A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a grave threat in the Middle East and beyond.

Iran remains the world's most significant state sponsor of terrorism.

Iran's leaders oppose Middle East peace.

Iran's leaders harbor ambitions of regional hegemony.

Armed with nuclear weapons, Iran's leaders could become even more dangerous.

Even if deterred from actually using nuclear weapons, merely possessing them could embolden Iran's leaders to make more aggressive use of terrorism and insurrection.

Moreover, Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear weapon capabilities increases the danger that other countries in the Middle East will seek similar capabilities or that nuclear weapons will end up in the hands of terrorists.

The Middle East is dangerous enough without a nuclear arms race or nuclear terrorism.

The IAEA's Investigation of Weaponization

The IAEA Board will meet in two weeks and consider yet another report on Iran by Director General Mohammed ElBaradei.

We will focus in particular on whether Iran has cooperated with the IAEA in its ongoing investigation into weaponization.

IAEA inspector first raised concerns about weaponization in 2005.

Before our meetings in March and June, Dr. ElBaradei and his chief inspector fully briefed the Board on their concerns.

They presented in great detail a troubling mosaic of studies, engineering work, and procurement related to the design and weaponization of a nuclear device.

These included:

- a document on casting and machining uranium metal into hemispheres,
- a document on experimentation with a multipoint initiation system to detonate high explosives in a hemispherical geometry;
- schematics on modifying the Shahab-3 missile in a way the IAEA judges is "quite likely to be able to accommodate a nuclear device;"

- other documentation and procurement information developed over multiple years and from multiple sources including the IAEA's own investigations and some ten member states.

The Director General reported that these and other activities are "relevant to nuclear weapon research and development" and a "matter of serious concern"

At our Board meeting in June, the Director General told us Iran had failed to provide substantive responses to the IAEA's questions.

We will closely read the Director General's upcoming report to look for any progress.

We await to see whether Iran provides the substantive responses asked by the Director General or whether it continues to stonewall.

The Board's expectations has not changed:

Iran must fully disclose its past work on weaponization and allow IAEA inspectors to verify it is stopped.

Our Dual-Track Strategy Toward Peaceful Resolution

The technical verification role of the IAEA is part of a broader dual-track strategy aimed at allowing Iran civil nuclear energy while giving the world concrete assurances of peaceful intent.

This dual-track strategy has been developed by the P5+1 -- France, Germany, the UK, the US, Russia, and China.

It has been endorsed by the UN Security Council, the European Union, and countries across the world.

The first track of the strategy is a negotiating track.

In June, the Foreign Ministers of the six countries transmitted a renewed offer to Iran.

This offer was carefully designed to address Iran's stated interests and concerns and contains significant political, economic, and technological benefits.

It would help Iran attain what its leaders claim they seek from Iran's nuclear program:

- economic benefit;
- advanced technology; and
- a new source of electricity

with a guaranteed supply of fuel.

It would also open the door to address a broader range regional and global concerns that Iran has asked to include in negotiations.

Secretary Rice reiterated her willingness to join the negotiations on the offer personally if only Iran's leaders take one simple step: suspend the uranium enrichment activities that give the world such concern but are not necessary for Iran's civil nuclear program.

America's readiness to negotiate was clearly demonstrated by Secretary Rice's signature on the letter conveying the P5+1 proposal in June and by the presence of Under Secretary Burns in Geneva to receive Iran's response.

The second track of the dual-track strategy involves diplomatic pressure and targeted sanctions to convince Iran's leaders to choose serious negotiation over continued defiance.

The UN Security Council reinforced this track in March by adopting Resolution 1803 with a third set of binding sanctions on Iran.

The Security Council is prepared to suspend these sanctions as soon as Iran suspends its uranium enrichment activities.

The goal of the sanctions is not to penalize the Iranian people.

The goal is to change the strategic calculus of their leaders.

We will only succeed in convincing them to choose negotiation over defiance by sustaining our strategy, fully implementing Security Council resolutions, and sending a collective message, in words and deeds, that is clear and consistent.

The Need for Close Cooperation

The United States values its close relationship with Norway.

Our close cooperation is essential if we are to succeed in keeping the most dangerous weapons out of the hands of the most dangerous regimes.

At the upcoming meeting of the IAEA Board, our countries should join with other like-minded countries:

- in strongly supporting the IAEA Secretariat in investigating Syria's covert nuclear activities;
- in insisting that Iran fully disclose its past weaponization work and allow IAEA inspectors to verify it has stopped;
- in pressing Iran to build international confidence, including by suspending enrichment activities.

Together, we can help make the world a safer place.

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