

Embassy of the United States

Department of State

You Are In: [Speeches](#) > [Iran](#) > 08-05-20 Madrid Remarks

SPEECHES

The Illicit Nuclear Pursuits of Iran and Syria: Implications for the European Union

Remarks by Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte

**U.S. Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency
and the United Nations in Vienna**

INCIPE

Madrid, Spain

May 20, 2008

When the IAEA Board meets in two weeks, we will consider the nuclear activities of Iran and Syria, two IAEA members who have violated their IAEA obligations.

These are dangerous regimes on dangerous pursuits.

- Both are state sponsors of terrorism.
- Both undermine 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 violator of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, 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, refusing to implement the IAEA's Additional Protocol to provide added transparency.

This explosive situation poses serious risks to the security of Spain and the United States, and of the European Union and NATO. Iran's nuclear pursuits remain the most dangerous. But Syria's clandestine activities show how a determined regime can still flout the IAEA. Each underscores the risks of nuclear proliferation in one of the world's most dangerous regions.

We must confront these risks together, for our close cooperation is essential to protect our collective security.

Syria's Covert Nuclear Activities

Syria's covert nuclear activities were exposed publicly only last month. On April 24, we briefed your government and other governments around the world about the nuclear reactor that Syria was building in its eastern desert near Al Kibar.

This reactor was damaged beyond repair by a military strike last September.

We believe, based on strong evidence, that North Korea assisted Syria with this reactor. Indeed, our intelligence experts are confident that the Syrian reactor near Al Kibar was the same type of reactor that North Korea built at its Yongbyon nuclear facility. The Yongbyon reactor produced the plutonium used in North Korea's nuclear weapons and is now being disabled as a result of the

Six-Party Talks.

We have good reason to believe that Syria's reactor at Al Kibar, like North Korea's reactor at Yongbyon, 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 a remote area and built earthen berms to hide it from observation and fake walls to disguise its configuration.
- Third, Syria failed to declare the reactor to the IAEA as required under its Safeguards Agreement. After it was destroyed in September, Syria falsely claimed that it was not a reactor but a military warehouse.
- Fourth, Syria went to great lengths to cover up its activities after the reactor was destroyed. While refusing IAEA requests to visit the site, its engineers hauled away incriminating equipment, buried what remained of the reactor, and built a large structure over the top.

When we briefed governments on Syria's covert activities, we also briefed the IAEA. The IAEA's Director General, Mohammed ElBaradei, vowed to treat this information with the seriousness it deserves and to mount an investigation. He noted that Syria is obliged, by Code 3.1 under its Safeguards Agreement, to report the planning and construction of any new nuclear facility to the IAEA.

We support the IAEA's investigation of Syria's violation of this IAEA requirement and call on Damascus to provide full cooperation. Syria's construction of this covert reactor was a dangerous and potentially destabilizing development for the region and the world. The Syrian regime must come clean about its illicit nuclear activities and give the IAEA the necessary information and access to assure the world that they have stopped.

It is time for disclosure, not continuing deception. And it is time for Syria to sign and implement the IAEA's Additional Protocol, which would help Agency inspectors verify that Syria's continued nuclear activities are exclusively peaceful.

The Proliferation Threat Posed by Iran

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

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 a 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 know-how 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 has 3,000 centrifuges in underground bunkers at Natanz. In April President Ahmadi-Nejad announced plans to double or triple the number installed. Iran is still learning how to operate these centrifuges and is working on more advanced models. Once 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 last year that it would not give the IAEA early notice of new nuclear facilities, despite an obligation to do so by Code 3.1 under its Safeguards Agreement. Ironically, this is the same Code 3.1 that Syria violated in building its Al Kibar 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 recently 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 -- though it does have enough for a sizeable stockpile of nuclear weapons.

The world is right to be concerned about Iran's rush to enrich uranium for reactors it doesn't have and for nuclear self-sufficiency it cannot achieve. Iran's determined pursuit of enrichment technology makes little sense from a civil perspective. On the other hand, enrichment technology is a necessary part of a nuclear weapons program, and the U.S. Intelligence Community assesses that Iran is two to seven years from being able to produce enough highly-enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon.

Assuming Iran proceeds to build a nuclear weapon, it has already produced a potential delivery system. The Shahab-3 ballistic missile, which has a range of 1300 kilometers, is already deployed with Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. This missile features in Iranian military parades often draped with a banner proclaiming "Death to Israel." Iran also claims to have a new missile with a range of 2000 kilometers and to be developing a missile of even longer range. The Shahab-3 could strike most of Israel and the Middle East, and the longer-range missiles could reach deeper into Europe, Africa, and Russia.

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 provides aid to Palestinian terrorist groups, Lebanese Hizballah, Iraq-based militants, and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.

Iran's leaders oppose Middle East peace. Rather than supporting a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, President Ahmadi-Nejad calls for the elimination of one of those states.

Iran's leaders harbor ambitions of regional hegemony. We see these ambitions being played out today in countries like Lebanon and Iraq.

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.

Moreover, Iran's continued pursuit of technologies that could be used to produce a nuclear weapon 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.

Our Role at the IAEA

The IAEA Board will meet in two weeks to consider the next report by Director General Mohammed ElBaradei. Among other topics, we will be looking to see whether Iran is prepared to address serious indications of recent covert work on weaponization.

Earlier this year, Dr. ElBaradei and his chief inspector reported on a troubling mosaic of studies, engineering work, and procurement related to the design and weaponization of a nuclear device. These included:

- receipt of a document from the A. Q. Khan network on casting and machining uranium metal into hemispheres, described by the IAEA as "components of a nuclear weapon";
- development of a special detonator and the ability to fire multiple detonators simultaneously, as needed for a particular type of nuclear weapon;
- schematics describing how to modify a re-entry vehicle for the Shahab-3 missile in a way that the IAEA judges is "quite likely to

be able to accommodate a nuclear device;"

- an arrangement for testing an explosive device in a 400-meter shaft with a firing capability ten kilometers away.

Now, I am not an engineer. But I suspect that technicians don't need to shelter themselves ten kilometers away to test conventional explosives. Instead, as the Director General reported, these various activities are "relevant to nuclear weapon research and development."

The overall effort described by the Secretariat -- involving personnel and institutes throughout Iran -- strongly suggests an organized program conducted at the direction of Iran's leadership. The Secretariat's concerns are entirely consistent with our own National Intelligence Estimate.

Iran's authorities have thus far dismissed the IAEA's information as "baseless allegations." But in a dramatic technical briefing before the IAEA Board's last meeting, the chief IAEA inspector explained why he cannot accept this conclusion. He explained how the IAEA had assembled this information over many years and from multiple sources including its own investigations. He explained the linkages between the activities and why they are consistent with research and development of nuclear weapons. He explained that the IAEA cannot give Iran a clean bill of health until these activities are fully explained and Iran gives the Agency the necessary information and access to verify they have stopped.

We will look to the Director General's upcoming report to tell us whether Iran is ready to "come clean" or whether it intends to continue to stonewall.

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 endorsed by the UN Security Council and was reaffirmed two months ago by Foreign Ministers of the so-called "P5+1" -- France, Germany, the UK, the US, Russia, and China.

The first track of the strategy is a negotiating track.

In June 2006, the Foreign Ministers of the six countries made an important and generous offer to Iran. The 2006 offer contains substantial opportunities for political, security and economic benefits. The offer would help Iran attain what its leaders claim they want from their nuclear program:

- international recognition;
- economic benefits;
- advanced technology; and
- a new source of electricity with a guaranteed supply of fuel.

The Foreign Ministers of the six countries recently reviewed and updated the June 2006 offer. The updated offer is now being transmitted to the government of Iran. We hope that Iran's leaders take this offer seriously and take the necessary steps to enter negotiations. Secretary Rice has made clear that she is prepared to join those negotiations personally if only Iran's leaders suspend uranium enrichment.

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. These sanctions are targeted on Iran's proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities as well as its production of ballistic missiles. The sanctions are targeted on the material and technology needed for these activities and on the individuals, organizations, and banks involved. The Security Council is prepared to suspend these sanctions as soon as Iran suspends its uranium enrichment activities.

Suspension is important because producing the fissile material is the most technically-challenging and time-consuming part of a nuclear weapons program, and Iran has already conducted significant work on how to weaponize the material. Suspension is important because there is no obvious civil requirement for Iran's enrichment activities, and the IAEA Board and UN Security Council

have lost confidence that the intent of these activities is entirely peaceful. Suspension is important to keep Iran's leaders from repeating their past ploy of using negotiations to provide cover for continued work on nuclear weapons technologies.

The goal of the sanctions is not to penalize the Iranian people. The goal is to change the strategic calculus of their leaders. Thus far Iran's leaders have chosen to remain defiant rather than to seize the opportunity for negotiation. 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 Spain, both bilaterally and within institutions like the IAEA and NATO. 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 next month's 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 and ensuring the absence of other undisclosed activities;
- insisting that Iran fully disclose its past weaponization work and allow IAEA inspectors to verify it has stopped;
- pressing Iran to take necessary confidence-building measures, including suspension of enrichment activities.

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

This site is managed by the U.S. Department of State.

External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.