

MEMO

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IAEA Set to Report on Iran's Weaponization Efforts

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is set to report by Dec. 15 its findings concerning the possible military dimensions (PMD) of Iran's nuclear program. In recent weeks, Iran raised a new demand that the IAEA close its PMD investigation before it will fulfill its obligations under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). However, Iran's intransigence will almost certainly prevent the IAEA from resolving lingering questions about Iran's weaponization efforts. Accordingly, the United States must insist that the IAEA keep the file on Iran's case open until Tehran comes clean and fully discloses the military dimensions of its nuclear program.

What do we know about Iran's weaponization program?

- A 2011 IAEA report detailed significant elements of Iran's nuclear program that were inconsistent with any peaceful use. The report was based on intelligence provided by more than 10 IAEA member states.
 - The report cited "credible" evidence "that Iran has carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device," including experimenting with neutron triggers, converting uranium gas into a metal sphere to form the core of a nuclear bomb, and making designs for fitting a nuclear warhead atop a Shahab-3 missile.
 - The report also detailed an elaborate Iranian program to acquire the skills necessary to produce and test a nuclear bomb; the receipt of foreign assistance in the development of key technologies; the repeated building of secret nuclear facilities; and the undeclared importation and use of nuclear materials.
 - The report asserted that Iran was continuing possible nuclear weapons work—noting Iran had conducted research in 2008 and 2009 on the development of a nuclear-capable warhead and was continuing research into triggering devices used to detonate nuclear bombs.
- In 2004, the United States obtained significant intelligence on Tehran's weaponization efforts when an Iranian technician sneaked a laptop containing weapon design information out of Iran. Tehran claims the information on the laptop is fabricated, but IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano called it "broadly credible" and consistent with independently gathered data.

What does the JCPOA require concerning PMD?

- The JCPOA requires Iran to provide the IAEA information on the possible military dimensions of its nuclear program and to respond to clarifying questions from the agency. The JCPOA does not explicitly indicate whether the information needs to be complete or accurate.
- Iran was required to provide the IAEA access to the Parchin military facility in accordance with a secret side agreement. On Sept. 20, the IAEA visited Parchin, but according to press reports the agency was granted only limited access to the facility and was prohibited from taking its own environmental samples.

- The JCPOA set a Dec. 15 deadline for Director General Amano to present a final assessment on the resolution of all past and present outstanding issues. It did not, however, link his findings to whether or not implementation of the JCPOA will proceed.
- Based on the Amano report, the P5+1 will submit a resolution to the IAEA Board of Governors with a view to closing the PMD issue. The Board of Governors—comprised of 35 nations—is likely to follow Amano’s lead, but could reject the report or seek additional information from Iran.

Why is resolving the PMD question important?

- Without a complete understanding of Iran’s past nuclear weaponization efforts, the IAEA will lack a sufficient baseline to create an effective inspections and verification regime capable of assuring Iranian compliance with the JCPOA.
- It is impossible to estimate how long it will take Iran to assemble a nuclear weapon—to break out—so long as the full state of its weaponization efforts remains unknown.
- Allowing Iran to maintain its fictitious narrative—that it never conducted any weaponization activity—undermines the notion that the JCPOA represents a shift in Iranian strategic thinking. Countries that previously abandoned their nuclear weapons ambitions have always admitted that they had such ambitions.

What should the IAEA do going forward?

- The IAEA must continue to investigate the possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program until such time as it can definitively say that it fully understands the scope of the program.
- The IAEA must not make the broader conclusion that Iran’s program is exclusively for peaceful purposes until Tehran has demonstrated its commitment to fulfilling the JCPOA and fully cooperating with all IAEA requests.
- The IAEA must stringently monitor the JCPOA and investigate every potential violation of the deal.
- If the IAEA suspects Iran is carrying out illicit nuclear work, it must demand immediate access to the suspect location. Iran must not be allowed to dictate the terms of access to suspect sites, even those located on military facilities.