

MEMMO

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Keep Iran Nuclear File Open

A Dec. 2 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [report](#) about the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of Iran's nuclear program confirms that Iran conducted a range of nuclear-weapons-related activities until at least 2009. Even after accepting the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) last July, Tehran continued to thwart the IAEA's investigation by ignoring some of its official inquiries, and by providing incomplete or deceptive responses to many others. The United States should insist that the IAEA keep the PMD file open until Iran fully complies with the agency's information requests.

Iran pursued a nuclear weapons program

- The IAEA report found “that a range of activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device were conducted in Iran prior to the end of 2003 as a coordinated effort, and some activities took place after 2003.”
- The IAEA report reveals that Iran conducted computer modelling of a nuclear explosive device and conducted extensive work required to trigger a nuclear explosion. Iran also began necessary preparations for carrying out an actual test of a nuclear weapon.
- The IAEA report provides extensive information indicating that Iran worked on integrating a nuclear warhead on to a Shahab-3 missile. “Iran considered a number of technical options for a fuzing, arming and firing system that would ensure that the new Shahab-3 missile spherical payload would remain safe until the re-entry vehicle reached its designated target, and that the payload would then function correctly.”
- The IAEA report highlights the fact that once Iran acquires sufficient fissile material, it will be well positioned to build a nuclear weapon.

Iran refuses to acknowledge the facts

- Iranian officials continue to deny that a nuclear weapons program ever existed in Iran.
- Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [said](#) the report confirms Iran's activities were peaceful and that the “invalidity of previous claims has been proven.”
- Iran's insistence on maintaining its fictitious narrative—that it never conducted any weaponization activity—makes clear that Tehran has no intention of fully disclosing its past activities.
- This behavior reinforces the concern that Iran will one day seize the opportunity to resume its nuclear weapons related activities. In contrast to Iran's behavior, other countries that abandoned their nuclear weapons programs have always admitted that they had such ambitions.

Iran stifled the IAEA investigation

- An [analysis](#) by the Institute for Science and International Security found that: “Overall, Iran provided little real cooperation. Denials and lack of truthfulness should not be confused with cooperation in the context of the JCPOA, any more than such ‘cooperation’ by a defendant in a criminal investigation would be construed as real cooperation.”
- Iran repeatedly failed to provide information to the IAEA, or provided information at variance with the agency’s understanding of Iran’s actual activity. Iran repeatedly denied activities were related to nuclear weapons, citing alternative uses in conventional arms or industry.
- Iran failed to provide substantive answers to a quarter of the IAEA’s questions. For example, Iran provided no explanation for certain activity it carried out related to exploding bridgewire (EBW) detonators. Such detonators are crucial to developing an implosion-type nuclear weapon.
- Iran carried out extensive activities at the Parchin facility to mask the activity that had taken place at the site, including the demolition of five buildings; removal, replacement or refurbishment of external wall structures; and significant ground scraping and landscaping. The IAEA determined these activities “seriously undermined” its ability to conduct effective verification.

The IAEA gained only limited access to suspect locations and personnel

- Iran failed to provide the IAEA with access to key officials involved in its weapons program. The IAEA is not believed to have met with Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the man suspected to have headed the Iranian program. Beyond Iran’s direct obfuscation, the IAEA never spoke to a key unnamed foreign expert who assisted Iran with high explosive testing.
- On Sept. 20, the agency reportedly obtained only limited access to the Parchin facility and subsequently analyzed environmental samples provided by Iranian officials.
- The samples Iran gathered revealed two uranium particles that appeared to be chemically man-modified. However, this small number precluded the IAEA from determining whether they were tied to a nuclear program. Additional samples might have enabled a more definitive conclusion.
- The IAEA only achieved access to some suspect locations years after their suspected use for nuclear weapons work. In the case of two workshops involved in integrating a nuclear weapon with a Shahab-3 missile, it took more than a decade to gain access after the suspicious work was carried out.

The investigation of Iran’s activities should continue

- Given the gaps in the IAEA report and Iran’s intransigence, the investigation of Tehran’s past nuclear weapons activities—and potential ongoing activities—should continue.
- The United States should insist that the IAEA keep Iran’s PMD file open until Tehran fully complies with all of the agency’s informational requests. The IAEA must also maintain its authority to review any new information that comes to light and aggressively investigate any new leads and accusations of Iranian maleficence. The effort to understand Iran’s nuclear weapons program must not cease.
- Without a complete understanding of Iran’s past nuclear weaponization efforts, the IAEA will lack a baseline required for an effective inspections and verification regime under the JCPOA.