

MEMMO

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Iran's Self-Inspections: A Dangerous Precedent

On Sept. 21, Iran announced that it had taken samples from the Parchin military facility without International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors present. Allowing Iran to inspect its own suspect facility is a dangerous and unusual procedure. The United States and its international partners must ensure that this step does not set a precedent that prevents the IAEA from inspecting suspect Iranian military facilities once the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) comes into full effect.

Iran Conducted Self-Inspection at Parchin

- According to a [report](#) by the *Islamic Republic News Agency*, Iran provided the IAEA with environmental samples taken from the Parchin military facility that were collected while no international inspectors were present.
- The samples were taken from a limited number of sites at Parchin that had been previously agreed upon by Iran and the IAEA. While the IAEA [asserted](#) “full” confidence in the process, it is likely Iran only agreed to the process because it was confident the sample sites had been fully sanitized.
- On Sept. 20, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano was given a "ceremonial" tour of Parchin, per the terms of the “Road Map” between Iran and the IAEA. However, neither he nor his inspectors were permitted to physically inspect the military facility.

Self-Inspections are Inadequate

- Permitting Iran to take its own samples at Parchin calls into severe question whether the IAEA will ever obtain a complete understanding of the possible military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program.
- Without this vital information, the IAEA will lack the needed baseline to construct a monitoring and verification regime capable of detecting Iranian violations of the JCPOA.
- David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, explained earlier this month why inspectors are needed on the ground. “You need the eyes and the brain to look where to sample... In the case of Parchin, it would be ‘look for where the paint doesn't look solid’...that's very hard to do with a video camera...the video camera opens up additional methods of deceiving the IAEA,” said Albright.

- Olli Heinonen, the former Deputy Director General of the IAEA, has also raised concerns with the inspections procedures at Parchin. “If the reporting is accurate, these procedures appear to be risky, departing significantly from well-established and proven safeguards practices. At a broader level, if verification standards have been diluted for Parchin (or elsewhere) and limits imposed, the ramification is significant as it will affect the IAEA’s ability to draw definitive conclusions with the requisite level of assurances and without undue hampering of the verification process,” said Heinonen.

The Potential for Establishing a Dangerous Precedent

- The JCPOA explicitly recognizes the possibility that Iran and the IAEA can reach agreement on measures short of physically inspecting suspect facilities. Paragraph 77 of Annex I to the JCPOA states, “Iran may propose to the IAEA alternative means of resolving the IAEA’s concerns...which should be given due and prompt consideration.”
- Acceptance of the inspection procedures at Parchin by the IAEA and P5+1 degrades their ability to insist on more extensive access to other suspect sites.

Iran’s Leaders Deny the IAEA’s Right to Inspect Military Sites

- “Regardless of how the P5+1 countries interpret the nuclear agreement, their entry into our military sites is absolutely forbidden. The entry of any foreigner, including IAEA inspectors or any other inspector, to the sensitive military sites of the Islamic Republic is forbidden, no matter what.”
- *Ali Akbar Velayati, Adviser to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, July 31, 2015*
- “The next redline was refusal to allow inspection or refusal to accept any restrictions in the defense and missile spheres, which has been fully achieved through the deal.”
- *Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, July 21, 2015*
- “We will by no means allow any [foreign] authority access to our military and security secret.”
- *Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan, July 21, 2015*