

Iran is advancing on dual nuclear bomb track

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Uranium plus Plutonium

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DEBKAFfile's military sources report that the UN inspectors' October visit to Iran turned up dual-track progress in support of its nuclear weapons program: Feverish activity was registered in the production of plutonium at Isfahan as an alternative to the Fordo enriched uranium plant near Qom which starts up in 2011.

The IAEA experts discovered 30 metric tons-IS of heavy water hidden in 600 tanks, each holding 13 gallons, according to the report they handed in last week to agency headquarters in Vienna.

From the shape of the tanks and other indications, the experts concluded that this stock had not come from the heavy water plant at Arak but was imported.

Metric tons-IS measure the amount of energy a given quantity can release. The force and types of nuclear bombs are gauged in kilotons or megatons. The American nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima in World War II was equal to 20 kilotons of TNT. By this standard, the amount of heavy water discovered at Isfahan would be enough to make at least one plutonium bomb when the plutonium reactor under construction near the Arak heavy water facility is finished.

Other than its civilian uses, heavy water may be used to produce tritium, which intensifies the explosive force of nuclear warheads. The discovery of quantities of heavy water at Isfahan confirms the suspicions surrounding Iran's nuclear program in three respects.

1. The long concealment of the Fordo site suggested to the UN inspectors that Iran has more hole-in-the-corner nuclear facilities in the country. The discovery of a stock of heavy water further confirmed that Tehran is working hard to attain a nuclear weapon capacity on more than one track and at additional covert sites.
2. The IAEA wants to know who is selling Iran heavy water in violation of Security Council resolutions banning the sale or export of nuclear materials to Iran.

The very fact that some government or outside entity is willing to flout UN resolutions demonstrates that any further international sanctions would be ineffective for halting Iran's nuclear drive, even assuming that President Barack Obama gained Russian and Chinese backing for such penalties. This backing has so far been withheld.

DEBKAFfile's sources report from Vienna that on November 10, IAEA director Mohamed ElBaradei sent a request to the Iranian Nuclear Energy Committee asking it to confirm the presence of the heavy water and document its origin with a full explanation. Tehran has yet to reply.

3. The presence of the heavy water tanks at Isfahan is additional proof that the reactor at Arak is designed for military purposes, not a peaceful installation as Tehran claims.

<http://www.debka.com/headline.php?hid=6381>