

'Iran building new clandestine nuclear facility'

Contributed by AP
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An Iranian resistance group claimed Thursday that Iran is constructing a secret, new underground military nuclear facility near its Natanz uranium enrichment plant.

The claim, made by the National Council of Resistance of Iran at a Paris news conference, could not be independently verified. The group said it has passed its information, which it said came from sources inside Iran, to the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria, but has so far not received a response.

The opposition group claimed that the site is 5 kilometers (3 miles) south of the Natanz plant, located under a mountain called Siah Kooh, which it said would help protect it from any air strike. It said the site includes two tunnels with entrances 6 meters (20 feet) in diameter and that a third tunnel links the alleged facility to Natanz.

The group said the site has been under construction since late 2006 and that it believed it would be completed within six months.

The group offered few details about what activities may be planned for the site, saying it did not know exactly. Nor did it offer concrete evidence to back up its claims.

The group is the political arm of the People's Mujahadeen Organization of Iran, a group that Washington and the European Union list as a terrorist organization. It has a mixed record of accuracy.

Five years ago it disclosed information about two hidden nuclear sites, including Natanz in central Iran, that helped uncover nearly two decades of covert Iranian atomic activity and sparked the present fears that Tehran wants to build a bomb.

But much of the information it has presented since then to back up claims that Iran has a secret weapons program has not been publicly verified.

Iran faces international pressure to halt its nuclear program, which the US and other nations insist is aimed at trying to develop nuclear weapons. Teheran adamantly denies the charge, saying the program has civilian aims only.

Iran is already subject to two UN sanctions resolutions as well as a growing number of financial penalties from individual nations, but China and Russia have been reluctant to agree to a new UN resolution.

Associated Press , THE JERUSALEM POST Sep. 27, 2007

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