

IAEA: Iran boosts nuclear work

UN nuclear watchdog concerned about country's expansion of low-enriched uranium production by 15 per cent.

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Iran continues to enrich uranium despite four rounds of UN sanctions [GALLO/GETTY]

Iran's total production of low-enriched uranium has risen by around 15 per cent since May to reach 2.8 tonnes, according to a restricted UN report.

The report, obtained by news agencies on Monday, said that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a Vienna-based UN agency, remained concerned about possible activity in the Islamic Republic to develop a nuclear payload for a missile.

"Iran has estimated that, between February 9 2010 and August 20 2010 ... 22 kilogrammes or UF₆ enriched up to 20 per cent has been produced" at its pilot fuel enrichment plant in Natanz,

the report said.

The White House called the report "troubling" and said that it showed Tehran was still trying to develop a nuclear weapons capability.

"The IAEA's latest report on Iran again demonstrates that Iran is refusing to comply with its international nuclear obligations, and continues its effort to expand its nuclear program and move closer to a nuclear weapons capability," Tommy Vietor, the White House spokesman, said.

Despite four rounds of UN sanctions, Iran is continuing to enrich uranium at its plant in Natanz.

UN inspectors barred

The Islamic republic says it needs the 20 per cent enriched uranium for a research reactor that makes radioisotopes for medical purposes, but the West fears the material is ultimately intended for a nuclear weapon.

Speaking to Al Jazeera from Tel Aviv, Meir Javedanfar, the author of *The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran*, said: "Iran has now overcome the biggest hurdle in its enrichment process."

"The distance between 20 per cent, which can be used for both civilian and military [purposes], and 90 per cent enriched uranium, which is for military purposes only, is very small."

"[It] is much smaller than between three and a half per cent to 20 per cent."

The IAEA also voiced concern about what it called Iran's "repeated objection to the designation of experienced inspectors hampers the inspection process and detracts from the agency's ability to implement safeguards in Iran."

"[It] thereby detracts from the agency's capability to implement effective and efficient safeguards in Iran."

The complaint follows Iran's recent decision to strip two experienced inspectors of the right to monitor Tehran's nuclear activities after they reported undeclared nuclear experiments conducted by Tehran.

According to Iran, the reporting by the two experts was inaccurate. But the IAEA said it had "full confidence in the professionalism and impartiality of the inspectors concerned, as it has in all of its inspectors."

The report is being circulated to the IAEA's 35-nation board and to the UN Security Council.

Iran bars two UN nuclear inspectors over report

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Iran insists its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes

Iran has told the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) it will not allow two of its inspectors to enter the country, state media report.

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, Ali Akbar Salehi, said they had prematurely published a report he described as "untruthful".

Mr Salehi did not say which parts of the report he considered inaccurate.

The decision comes two weeks after the UN Security Council voted to impose a fourth round of sanctions on Iran.

US President Barack Obama said the punishment, for continuing to defy resolutions ordering it to suspend all enrichment of uranium, was an unmistakable message on stopping the spread of nuclear arms.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the sanctions should be thrown in the dustbin like a "used handkerchief".

The US and its allies fear Iran is trying to build a nuclear bomb, but Tehran insists its nuclear programme is solely for peaceful purposes.

'Classified information'

In January, Tehran told the IAEA its scientists had carried out pyroprocessing experiments, a process which can be used to purify uranium for use in nuclear weapons, prompting a request from the agency for more information.

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If an inspector makes a report contrary to the standing fact... we have the right to place a protest as we did in regard to the report by two inspectors

Ali Akbar Salehi Iranian Atomic Energy Organisation [In depth: Nuclear fuel cycle Q&A: Iran nuclear issue](#)

But it then backtracked in March and denied conducting such activities.

In May, IAEA experts visited the site of the alleged experiments in Tehran only to find an electrochemical cell had been "removed" from the unit used in them, according to the IAEA report released to the media later that month.

Iranian officials insist that they did not remove any equipment and that the experiments were not related to pyroprocessing.

"Iran last week announced that these two [inspectors] would not have the right to enter Iran due

to submitting wrong... information as well as disclosing classified information before the proper official time," Mr Salehi was quoted as saying by the Isna news agency.

"Their report was utterly untruthful and... we asked that they would not ever send these two inspectors to Iran and instead assign two others," he added.

"If an inspector makes a report contrary to the standing fact... we have the right to place a protest as we did in regard to the report by two inspectors."

There was no immediate comment from the Vienna-based IAEA.

Correspondents say relations between Iran and the IAEA have become more strained since Yukiya Amano became the agency's director-general in December and took a tougher approach than his predecessor, Mohamed ElBaradei.

EU leaders approve fresh sanctions against Iran

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Iran says its nuclear programme is aimed solely at peaceful energy use

European Union leaders have approved a new set of sanctions against Iran that go further than the latest United Nations measures.

The fresh EU sanctions include a ban on investments, technical assistance and technology transfers to Iran's key oil and gas industry.

On Wednesday, the US announced its own fresh sanctions, implementing the UN measures approved last week.

Western powers suspect Iran is seeking nuclear weapons - which Tehran denies.

The new EU sanctions were approved on Thursday by a summit in Brussels.

In a statement, the leaders expressed regret "that Iran has not taken the many opportunities which have been offered to it to remove the concerns of the international community over the nature of the Iranian nuclear programme".

Iran's shipping and air cargo companies will also be banned from operating in EU territory, and new visa bans and asset freezes will target Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

Russian objections

The new EU sanctions will now be passed on to experts who will work out which companies and products would be targeted.

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We are extremely disappointed that neither the United States nor the European Union is heeding our calls to refrain from such steps

Sergei Ryabkov Russian Deputy Foreign Minister

Correspondents say the move will put strong pressure on Iran, which is the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, but has limited refining capability.

On Thursday Russia criticised the EU's planned sanctions.

"We are extremely disappointed that neither the United States nor the European Union is heeding our calls to refrain from such steps," Russian news agencies quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying.

The US sanctions announced on Wednesday ban Americans from trading with a number of firms and individuals, including Iran's Post Bank, Defence Minister Ahmad Vahidi and the air force and missile command of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

On 10 June the Security Council endorsed a fourth round of UN sanctions on Iran, including tighter financial curbs and an expanded arms embargo.

The US has banned most trade with Iran since 1979, when Iranian student stormed the American embassy and took diplomats hostage.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad dismissed the vote as "a used handkerchief" fit for the dustbin.

Tehran has rejected calls by the Security Council to halt uranium enrichment - which could have military as well as civilian uses.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is solely designed to produce energy.

US expands sanctions against Iran

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Iran says its nuclear programme is aimed solely at peaceful energy use

The United States is expanding its sanctions on Iran because of concerns about its nuclear

ambitions.

Washington said the individuals and institutions targeted are helping Iran to develop its nuclear programme.

This is the first step in implementing sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council last week.

Those blacklisted include Iran's Post Bank and the air force and missile commands of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Western powers accuse Iran of seeking to develop nuclear weapons - a charge Iran strongly denies.

Front companies targeted

The US sanctions prohibit any American business or individual from trading with those named on the blacklist. The sanctions also freeze any assets they may have under US jurisdiction.

"We will continue to target Iran's support for terrorist organisations, we will continue to focus on Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and we will continue to expose Iran's efforts to evade international sanctions," US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner told a White House news briefing.

Also on the list is a front company for the national shipping line, which is run by the Revolutionary Guards. The Treasury has designated 27 new ships and has updated entries for 71 others whose names had been changed.

The designation of Post Bank brings to 16 the total number of Iranian banks under sanctions. The US Treasury says Post Bank is a front for Bank Sepah, which was designated in 2007 for providing financial service to the Iranian missile industry.

EU sanctions

Last week the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, dismissed the UN sanctions as "a used handkerchief" fit for the dustbin.

The European Union, which has been working closely with Washington, will decide on its own sanctions at a summit on Thursday.

The EU's proposed sanctions go further than the UN, targeting the oil and gas industry.

EU countries such as Germany and Italy have become important trading partners for Iran, but the EU is becoming increasingly concerned that Iran may be pursuing nuclear weapons.

New UN sanctions will not deter Iran

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By Paul Reynolds



World affairs correspondent, BBC News website
Iran's president has been intransigent in the face of UN sanctions

The new round of sanctions on Iran is unlikely to have any more effect on Iranian policy than the first three.

Only hours before the Security Council approved the latest measures, Western diplomats were saying that this sanctions resolution would not be the last.

This suggests many more months of waiting to see what Iran does, more monitoring and reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and more negotiations over yet more sanctions.

It also implies that the option of an attack on Iranian nuclear plants is not an active one, though diplomats do accept that at some stage it will not be realistic to hope for any diplomatic solution.

The choice then will be between accepting whatever Iran has developed (which might be short of making an actual bomb) or taking military action.

Oil and gas

There is disappointment, though not surprise, in Washington, London, Paris and Berlin that, in this resolution, Russia and China blocked any move to act against Iran's oil and gas industries.

There was never any chance that they would agree. They both have oil and gas interests in Iran and do not see Iran as a strategic threat.

Which is why the US Congress is now expected to pass its own legislation banning companies that invest significantly in Iranian oil and gas from operating in the US.

The British government will also be pressing the EU to take measures restricting investment in the Iranian energy field.

It appears that Western governments hope that energy might be a future target. They are pointing out that, in the latest resolution, it is mentioned that Iranian revenues for its "proliferation-sensitive" activities come mainly from the energy sector. They hope that this can be built on.

All this amounts to an acceptance that, while the old and new sanctions might be slowing down Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile work, they have not stopped them nor have they led to any softening of the Iranian position.

Iran has rejected the Security Council demands as illegal and has said that it will press on with uranium enrichment, but will not build a nuclear weapons.

Failure

There are two reasons why sanctions have failed.

The first is that they are not targeted against Iran's vital economic interests, and Iran has developed systems of evasion in any case.

The second is that the Iranian government is more than willing to absorb the limited economic effect they have in favour of the greater political benefit it gets from continuing with its nuclear activities.

Indeed, sanctions are another flag around which to rally its supporters.

The new resolution aims to add to the previous attempts to stop Iran from acquiring nuclear or ballistic missile technology. It aims to

- Ban the supply to Iran of heavy weapons, including tanks, warships, helicopter gunships and missiles
- Tighten up the ban on dealings with Iranian banks and individuals, including businesses and members of the Revolutionary Guard
- Enable states to search any suspect ship or plane.

Will Iran budge?

The problem is that the really hard-hitting sanctions have been avoided. The most damaging measures would be to stop the sale to Iran of finished petroleum products and to ban investment in its oil and gas industries. Despite its wealth of oil deposits, Iran cannot refine enough products for its own use.

Iran has also managed to work round the systems already in place.

In April, a Washington-based monitoring group, Iran Watch, reported that the Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) had undertaken "a large-scale re-labeling of its ships, giving them new names, new managers, new 'owners' - in short, new identities".

"The US blacklist has not kept up with these changes, so it is being circumvented by Iran with relatively little effort," Iran Watch said.

The New York Times followed this up with a detailed account of how it has been done.

The result of all this is that Security Council sanctions have tended to be the lowest common denominator in which the important thing is to preserve the unity of the council.

Yet the more unity there is, the fewer the sanctions.

This is why the US Congress has prepared measures of its own, in addition to the blanket trade ban the US imposed in 1995.

It may well be that pressure by the US and the EU, under which individual companies simply stop trading with Iran, might have more economic effect than the UN.

But, again, will Iran budge?

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