

The IAEA: From UN Nuclear Watchdog to US Lapdog

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As the United Nations' nuclear inspections body, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), meets in Vienna later this week to discuss its latest report on Iran, there are signs that Washington is now writing the IAEA's script.

The most glaring indication of the IAEA's appeasement of US belligerence over the latter's allegations of Iranian nuclear ambitions, and therefore the need for further punitive UN sanctions, is the gaping omission from the agency's report of the Tehran nuclear fuel swap declaration.

Despite acknowledging that the agency has yet again not found any evidence to suggest the diversion of nuclear material from civilian purposes, the IAEA nevertheless draws the conclusion that it "remains concerned about the possible existence in Iran of past or current undisclosed nuclear related activities, involving military related organisations, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile".

The report dated 31 May found its way into the media on 1 June ahead of the IAEA Board of Governors' meeting scheduled for this week.

The report also states that Iran has amassed 2,427 kg of low-enriched (3-5 per cent) uranium. "Contrary to the relevant resolutions of the [IAEA's] Board of Governors and the Security Council, Iran has not suspended enrichment related activities," it says, adding: "Iran is not implementing the requirements contained in the relevant resolutions of the Board of Governors and the Security Council... which are essential to building confidence in the exclusively peaceful purpose of Iran's nuclear programme".

Conveniently for Washington's strenuous efforts to cohere the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to vote through a fourth round of sanctions against Iran - perhaps also this week - the IAEA report played into the fevered imaginations of mainstream Western media outlets.

The Associated Press said it was "a report that heightened Western concerns about the country developing the ability to produce a nuclear weapon".

AP asserted: "Two tons [approximately 2,000 kg] of uranium would be enough for two nuclear warheads." [1] Similar overblown claims were made by the New York Times and other US media.

But, in truth, the latest IAEA report has very little to add to its previous ones, the last one being in February. Iran's ambassador to the agency Ali Asghar Soltanieh dismissed the report as raising "repetitive" issues, which he said damaged the IAEA's credibility.

“The continuation of this trend is seriously damaging the IAEA... [Yukiya] Amano [the agency’s director general] should put an end to this boring game and this sort of repetitive request and partial reflection of facts”.

William Beeman, professor at the University of Minnesota, said: “It is clear that the IAEA is being pressured to toughen their stance, but the tough language

is almost completely rhetorical. They still clearly assert that ‘the agency continues to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran,’ which is the bottom line. Aside from this there is barely anything new in the report.”

Beeman added: “One wonders how much the United States contributed to this report because the technical aspects are cut and dried. The final sections have all dark speculation – speculation that mirrors what we hear from the US administration.”

Yukiya Amano took over from Mohamed ElBaradei as the IAEA chief at the end of last year. ElBaradei had earned a reputation for scientific independence and he often clashed with the US, which accused him of “muddying the waters” and sending the “wrong message to Iran”. Most notably, ElBaradei forcefully stated that there was “no evidence” of Tehran having or intending to build a nuclear bomb, that its nuclear activities were legal, and he reiterated that Iran had met all its obligations with regard to facilitating IAEA inspections.

The same independence cannot be attributed to Amano. The disturbing question is why the IAEA under his charge did not give a single mention to the Tehran nuclear fuel swap declaration.

That deal was signed on 17 May between Iran, Turkey and Brazil in which Iran committed to swap half of its stock of low-enriched uranium in exchange for nuclear fuel rods enriched to the 20 per cent level from either France or Russia. This material would then be used for medical research and treatments. Iran, Turkey and Brazil are still advocating the proposal, which they say could be overseen by the IAEA. The 20 per cent uranium that Iran would receive, under Turkey’s guarantee, would be far below the 80-90 per cent level required for weaponisation, which Iran has repeatedly said that it is not interested in anyway, despite relentless western claims.

Tellingly, the US moved swiftly to dismiss the tripartite declaration within hours of its announcement, with secretary of state Hillary Clinton immediately renewing the push for the fourth round of sanctions.

This despite the fact that the Tehran declaration was hailed by several world leaders, including the UN chief Ban Ki-moon, as a “breakthrough” in the long-running US confrontation with Iran. The deal was formally submitted to the IAEA on 24 May [2] – a full week before the agency’s latest report was published.

The IAEA is supposedly a scientific body dedicated to promoting the peaceful use of atomic energy. Evidently, a serious exposure to US politics has contaminated that body.

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Notes

[1]

http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iijfYgMUu7W_-ZKg8BjH5QNTww5QD9G20TA00

[2] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/middle_east/10148376.stm

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Finian Cunningham has written extensively on international affairs, with articles published in several languages. Many of his recent articles appear on the renowned Canadian-based news website [Globalresearch.ca](#). He is a Master's graduate in Agricultural Chemistry and worked as a scientific editor for the Royal Society of Chemistry, Cambridge, England, before pursuing a career in journalism. He specialises in Middle East and East Africa issues and has also given several American radio interviews as well as TV interviews on Press TV and Russia Today. Previously, he was based in Bahrain and witnessed the political upheavals in the Persian Gulf kingdom during 2011 as well as the subsequent Saudi-led brutal crackdown against pro-democracy protests.

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