

U.S. Documents Describe Hiding of Military Assets by “Rogue Nations” & Other States as Major Security Challenge for 21st Cent.

By [The National Security Archive](#)

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Washington, DC, March 23, 2012 — A central element of the current debate over how to deal with Iran’s nuclear program has focused on the possible difficulty of destroying the Qom underground uranium enrichment facility via air strikes. However, documents posted today by the National Security Archive show that Qom is only the latest in a long series of alleged and real underground facilities that for decades have been a high priority challenge for U.S. and allied intelligence collection and analysis efforts, as well as for military planners.

The documents featured in this posting describe in detail the agencies and programs the U.S. government has brought to the task of identifying and assessing underground structures in foreign countries since World War II. Internal records indicate there are more than 10,000 such facilities worldwide, many of them in hostile territory, and many presumably intended to hide or protect lethal military equipment and activities, including weapons of mass destruction, that could threaten U.S. or allied interests.

The records (and introductory essay by Archive Fellow Jeffrey T. Richelson) also discuss the vast complexities of gathering and analyzing intelligence on these facilities, and detail several of the highly technical methods U.S. agencies have developed for the purpose over time.

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