

IAEA: Diplomacy Can Work—If Desired

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The report issued by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Mohammad ElBaradei on Nov. 15 should be taken as further confirmation that diplomacy works. In effect, it validates the agreement reached between the Agency and Iran on Aug. 21, whereby all remaining questions and unclaritys regarding Iran's nuclear program, would be subjected to a question-and-answer process between the two, until both were satisfied. The new report indicates that indeed further important progress has been made since then, in successively dealing with specific issues, like the P-1 and P-2 centrifuges, essentially closing that chapter. While further issues remain to be dealt with, the implication of the report is that, if the same procedure is followed in a climate of good will on both sides, they, too, can be settled.

As anticipated, those committed to military conflict with Iran, are reading the report to stress what issues do remain open, such as the contentious Additional Protocol, to seize upon statements about what the IAEA has, as yet, *not* been able to exclude or ascertain. In short, the report has immediately become a political football.

Any rational reader of the report, "Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolution 1737 (2006) and 1747 (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran," would be struck by the efficiency of the method followed by the IAEA and Iran in settling issues, and by the wealth of material provided on past aspects of the nuclear program. At the outset, the paper reports on progress made since the Aug. 21 agreement. Regarding P-1 and P-2 centrifuges, for example, it states that on Aug. 31, "the Agency provided to Iran in writing the outstanding questions relating to the P-1 and P-2 uranium enrichment programme"; that meetings took place in late September and early October in Tehran on the matter; and that during the latter, "Iran provided oral answers," and "the Agency requested additional clarifications and amplifications." In mid-October the IAEA received preliminary answers in writing, after which technical teams went to Tehran for further discussions, including on nuclear work in the 1980s and 1990s. "On 5 and 12 November 2007," the report states, "Iran provided in writing its response to the Agency's questions," etc.

Still on the subject of centrifuges, the report details the history of Iran's work, from the time it received an offer in 1987 for components and equipment "by a foreign intermediary" to its research and development of the same. "Based on



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A report issued by IAEA director Mohammad ElBaradei on Iran's nuclear program confirms that diplomacy is working; but the Cheneyac war-mongers are pushing the opposite view.

interviews with available Iranian officials and members of the supply network," the report says, "limited documentation provided by Iran and procurement information collected through the Agency's independent investigations, the Agency has concluded that Iran's statements are consistent with other information available to the Agency" on the matter.

The same formulation is used to express the IAEA's assessment of related issues. For example, on the offer in 1993 for Iran to purchase enrichment technology, the report says the Agency "has so far not been able to confirm Iran's statement that the supply network initiated the 1993 offer," but, "Information provided by Iran on the deliveries and technical meetings after 1993 is consistent with that given to the Agency in interviews with some of the network members." And so on, and so forth. Iran's version is found "consistent" with the IAEA's findings regarding work on centrifuges, as well as the times and quantities of material purchases. The same goes for Iran's version of P-2 R&D activities.

Unsettled Issues

A number of important issues remain open. Among them are: the source of uranium particle contamination found at a technical university; studies regarding plutonium-210; activities at a mining and milling area (Gehine Mine); studies on the conversion of uranium dioxide into UF₄ (the green salt project); and current enrichment activities. In all cases, the report states that "Iran should provide answers" in the next weeks.

One problem area identified in the report is the Heavy Water Production Plant. Here, the IAEA has to rely on satellite imagery, because "it does not have routine access to it while the Additional Protocol remains unimplemented." The cited protocol was a document that Iran agreed to, on a voluntary basis, and then abandoned in early 2006. The protocol had allowed for intrusive, unannounced inspections to various sites. Iran had accepted the protocol as a gesture of good will on its part, hoping that it would get something in return. Specifically,

Iran wanted transfer of nuclear technology from the European Union's group of three (Germany, Great Britain, and France) which had been negotiating on the issue. In late Summer of 2005, the EU made Iran an "offer" it could not accept, and later, Tehran abandoned the protocol. The "offer" did propose assistance in a civil nuclear program, but on condition that Iran limit its fuel cycle activities to a light water reactor and to research; that it "make a legally binding commitment not to withdraw from the NPT," to ratify the Additional Protocol, allowing inspectors free rein anywhere and everywhere, and halt construction on its Heavy Water Research Reactor at Arak.

Most insulting were the "security guarantees," which, referring back to generic statements in a UN Security Council resolution 984 of 1995, indicated that nuclear powers (Britain and France) would not attack Iran with nuclear weapons! Iran rejected the offer as an insult, an attempt to halt its entire nuclear program, and illegal under international law.

In its Summary, the report concludes, "The Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of declared nuclear material in Iran." However, the report then complains that its "knowledge about Iran's current nuclear programme is diminishing" since Tehran abandoned the Additional Protocol. The Summary adds that, "Contrary to the decisions of the Security Council, Iran has not suspended its enrichment related activities..." As a result, ElBaradei "urges" Iran to implement the Additional Protocol again, and to suspend all enrichment-related activities. The Summary also notes that, although Iran has been cooperative with the IAEA, "its cooperation has been reactive rather than proactive."

The most equivocal, and therefore dangerous, note in the Summary, is the statement that, "Although the Agency has no concrete information, other than that addressed through the work plan, about possible current undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, the Agency is not in a position to provide credible assurances about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran without full implementation of the Additional Protocol." In short, guilty until proven innocent.

On balance, the report documents progress made as a result of the method adopted in August by the two sides. The Iranian government has welcomed it on that account. However, the continuing demands for intrusive inspections, and for suspension of enrichment activities, will not find acceptance in Tehran, on grounds that they are tantamount to stopping the entire program. And, they are in flagrant violation of the very NPT that Iran is supposed to accept. If the IAEA and the "international community" were to draw the positive conclusions from the report, they would wholeheartedly endorse an accelerated continuation of the question-and-answer procedure that has yielded such promising results. If, however, as recent threats emanating from Vice President Dick Cheney and others indicate, the intention is to provoke conflict, the question marks left in the report will be exploited as "proof" that Iran is hiding a weapons program.