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“IN TIME OF HYPE, TELLING THE TRUTH BECOMES A REVOLUTIONARY ACT”

The war of words over Iran’s nuclear ambitions has escalated recently, with the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner warning the world to “prepare for the worst, and the worst is war” (although later withdrawn) and especially a spate of articles in the US print media targeting ElBaradei and the IAEA after agreeing on a time-schedule with Iran to answer outstanding questions about Iran’s nuclear program.

Since admitting to a nearly two-decade old covert nuclear program in 2003, Iran has struggled to provide enough information about its activities to alleviate Western fears that the nation is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. However, the IAEA concluded in its latest report (IAEA INFCIRC 711, 27 August 2007): “*The Agency has been able to verify the non-diversion of the declared nuclear materials at the enrichment facilities in Iran and has therefore concluded that it remains in peaceful use.*” The report cites several contentious issues that have been resolved recently through a renewed dialogue with Iran and the work program that Iranian and U.N. officials agreed to in a series of meetings in July and August. The report suggests that if Iran adheres to the program and timelines, the agency could resolve its remaining questions about the nature of the country's nuclear program by the end of the year and close the file.

ElBaradei reacted to the Kouchner (founding father of ‘*Medicins sans frontiers*’) statement about preparation for war with Iran as follows “What I see right now is a lot of hype, it reminds me of a paraphrase of George Orwell’s quotation: ‘In time of hype, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act.’”

Iran and its Safeguards Agreement

But why again is there so much upset about Iran? And is ElBaradei telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth (as a true ‘revolutionary act’?) or is he player in the ‘hype’ about Iran and it’s nuclear program (especially it’s enrichment program)?

On May 15, 1974, Iran entered into an agreement with the IAEA – to remain in force as long as Iran remained a party to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons – wherein all Iranian "source or special fissionable materials" and activities involving them were to be made subject to IAEA Safeguards "with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful purposes."

Now, it is true that Iran *voluntarily* suspended certain activities in 2003 when it signed an Additional Protocol to its Safeguards Agreement, and offered to begin complying with the Additional Protocol, immediately, in advance of its formal ratification. And, in 2005, offered to *permanently* suspend certain other activities, in return for certain security guarantees by the European Union. But that offer to the EU was never even acknowledged, no NPT-illegal sanctions on Iran were ever lifted, and no security guarantees were ever provided to Iran. So, Iran resumed some of the activities it had voluntarily suspended. Furthermore, Iran’s Parliament decided *not* to ratify the Additional Protocol and ordered the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency to cease complying with it. Since then, the official mission and role of the IAEA in Iran is once again totally proscribed by the original Safeguards Agreement and its Subsidiary Arrangements.

Nevertheless, on February 4, 2006, under extreme pressure by the US, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution in which it concluded that for "confidence" to be built "in the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program" it was "deemed necessary" for Iran to :

- * *re-establish full and sustained suspension of all enrichment related and reprocessing activities, including research and development, to be verified by the Agency;*
- * *reconsider the construction of a research reactor moderated by heavy water;*
- * *ratify promptly and implement in full the Additional Protocol;*
- * *pending ratification, continue to act in accordance with the provisions of the Additional Protocol which Iran signed on 18 December 2003;*
- * *implement transparency measures, as requested by the Director General, including in GOV/2005/67, which extend beyond the formal requirements of the Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol, and include such access to individuals, documentation relating to procurement, dual use equipment, certain military-owned workshops and research and development as the Agency may request in support of its ongoing investigations.*

Now, it is certainly within the Board's purview to ask Iran to resolve those legitimate "outstanding questions" concerning Iran's implementation of its Safeguards agreement, chronicled in the Director-General's report of September 2, 2005. But nowhere does the UN Charter, the IAEA Statute or the NPT, itself, even suggest that the Board needs to satisfy itself that any country's nuclear program is exclusively peaceful. For the Board to "deem it necessary" for a sovereign state to promptly ratify the Additional Protocol to its existing Safeguards Agreement – a treaty – is a stunning violation of the IAEA UN-proscribed charter. And for the Board to "report" Iran to the Security Council as a "threat to the peace" for Iran's failure to comply with the Board's illegal and outrageous demands is beyond the pale.

According to its own primary mission, the IAEA Board should have censured US President Clinton for his successful attempts in 1995 to prevent Russia from supplying Iran a turn-key gas-centrifuge uranium-enrichment plant and China from supplying Iran a turn-key uranium-conversion plant. Or his unsuccessful attempts to prevent Russia from completing the nuclear power plant at Bushehr. (all perfectly legal under all treaties and the main reason why Iran is building an indigenous uranium enrichment plant in the first place). Today, the IAEA Board should be (again, according to its mission) doing all it can to facilitate the coming on-line of Bushehr and completion of the uranium-enrichment plant at Natanz.

But as said, IAEA and Iran reached an agreement and in his speech at the IAEA Annual Conference on September 17, the IAEA Director General once again reiterated Iran's cooperation with the IAEA

El Baradei and the IAEA

Mohamed ElBaradei is an unexpected thorn in Washington's side. The US backed the American-educated Egyptian lawyer's unexpected rise to the top job at the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1997. In the run-up to the Iraq invasion, however, he flatly (and correctly as it turned out) contradicted US assertions about Saddam Hussein's supposed nuclear program. The Bush administration attempted to have Mr ElBaradei ousted from his position, but his international support was much too solid following the Iraq debacle.

Since winning the Nobel prize in 2005, the 65-year-old IAEA chief has become virtually unassailable but his critics say that the award has gone to his head. Mr ElBaradei has indeed been increasingly outspoken. In a recent BBC interview, for example, he remonstrated against the "new crazies", a clear reference to US hawks pushing for military action in Iran. He is also on record saying that the nuclear-weapon state really should start to get rid of the nuclear weapons.

But, although he seems to be the most independent director general in the history of the IAEA, he is leading the organization responsible for an enormous pro-offensive in favor of nuclear energy, he is a firm believer of the possibilities to use nuclear fission for peaceful purposes and believes the military use of it is something completely different. And he defends the US-India 123 Agreement.

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and the IAEA's conclusion that it had verified that of the declared nuclear materials by Iran none had been diverted; even as El Baradei continued to bemoan the fact that Iran has shown no inclination to stop production of its Heavy Water facility at Arak and there were still outstanding issues the IAEA had with Iran. He referred to the positive development of the time bound agreement between the IAEA and Iran to resolve all outstanding issues.

As to "outstanding" issues that are relevant to Iran's Safeguards agreement; on the matter about plutonium experiments there were some remaining questions, but Iran provided clarifications that were "*consistent with the Agency's findings, and thus the matter is resolved.*" They agreed to try to resolve questions concerning the production of minute quantities Polonium-210 and the source of the enriched-uranium micro-contamination found at "a technical University in Tehran."

The Iranians agreed to try to document all attempts to procure, manufacture and operate so-called P2 (second generation) gas centrifuges.

Media attack on ElBaradei and IAEA

Since the IAEA-Iran agreement we have begun to see a spate of articles targeting IAEA and ElBaradei in the US and US-controlled print media. Some have been downright abusive with the Washington Post labeling him a "rogue" regulator; that word which has become so central to the Bush era in the US. If one is not falling in line with the US, then one is a "rogue" of one form or another. Some UN Secretary Generals also had to suffer a similar fate, but the language now being used by the US media for ElBaradei goes further than earlier slander of international personalities. What has bothered the US is the fact that the IAEA under its present leadership has proactively sought to resolve this issue peacefully by dialoguing with Iran instead of supporting the American position of seeking confrontation through provocation so that a pretext can be provided for US military action. Remember Iraq and the WMD issue?

Worse still, this time a newly resurgent rightwing leadership in countries like France are supporting the policy. "We have to prepare for the worst, and the worst is war," the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said in a broadcast interview in which he described the current tensions as "the greatest crisis" (although a few days later he said he was misinterpreted by the media) Even the EU (in a speech at the General Conference on September 11) did not give the agreement the diplomatic backing expected, which led to ElBaradei actually walking out of the meeting for some time. And, also most ironic, India, which had championed an anti-imperial stance and a non-discriminatory

In a recent interview with the German magazine Der Spiegel ElBaradei he makes that very clear again.

Spiegel: India never joined the NPT, and it tested a nuclear weapon in 1998. The IAEA is not even allowed to inspect India's civilian plants, not to mention its military ones. And yet the United States now wants to supply Delhi with new nuclear technology and fuel. Why didn't you object to this deal?

ElBaradei: I was even in favor of it. I am not a purist or a dreamer. India became a nuclear power, and it was ostracized internationally for a time as a result. This no longer makes any sense. We would consider it progress if we could monitor India's civilian nuclear power plants in the future, and we will likely begin negotiations on this issue with Delhi soon, provided the deal isn't cancelled as a result of domestic political disagreements first.

(...)

Spiegel: What would you like to see as your legacy?

ElBaradei: I am in favor of a multinational procedure in matters of uranium enrichment and reprocessing. Ultimately, no single country should be in a position to independently produce nuclear material.

So, If there is a shift in the policy of the IAEA since ElBaradei became Director General it could be this: "Ultimately, no single country should be in a position to independently produce nuclear material." Already in March 2004 ElBaradei appointed an international group of experts to consider possible multinational approaches to the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. The report was published ("*Multilateral approaches to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle*") in 2005 and suggests 5 approaches. This however, is totally in line with the US policy and it's GNEP-initiative to monopolize the fuel cycle (although of a later date and not mentioned in the report).

approach to international relations has now become a symbol of such a discriminatory approach through its dubious nuclear deal with the US. Such are the ironies of international politics!

So for the first time there is a time-schedule for the remaining “outstanding” issues (even outstanding issues that are not relevant to Iran’s Safeguards agreement), and still, the chances of war looking larger than ever.

Sources: *Global Security Newswire*, 17 September 2007 / *The News* (Pakistan), 19 September 2007 / *Nuclear Monitor* 659, 6 September 2007 / Director General’s Statement to IAEA 51st General Conference, at www.iaea.org / *The Guardian* (UK), 18 September 2007 / *Der Spiegel*, 3 September 2007 / *Rogue Regulator?* 8 September 2007 at www.antiwar.com / *IAEA-Iran Resolving Outstanding Questions*, 1 September 2007 at www.antiwar.com

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