UN Report on Iran's Nuke Program Affirms Past Weapons Effort

December 2, 2015

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A much-anticipated report from the UN's nuclear watchdog on Iran’s nuclear program indicates the Islamic Republic tried at some point to get the bomb, but leaves may key questions unanswered.

The report, which the International Atomic Energy Agency circulated to its 35-nation board, shows that Iran worked in the past on nuclear weapons but its activities didn’t go past planning such a program and testing of basic components. Iran has consistently claimed that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, so the reported finding appears to debunk such a claim. Also as expected, the IAEA admits in the report that not all information was made available by Tehran, so findings are inconclusive.

The IAEA report is part of the process of clearing the way toward lifting UN sanctions on Iran since the Security Council endorsed the P5+1 Iran nuclear deal in July. Iran still needs to abide by its commitments under the July 14 accord to get UN sanctions relief.

Still, Iran sought to spin the report as positive.

According to Iran’s Tasnim news, Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said today, “The final report of IAEA shows no evidence of a nuclear weapons program or diversion of nuclear material in Iran has been found," said Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. “Now we can say all measures regarding past issues have been completely resolved and the issue of PMD is now finished.”

How the report is received by the international community is significant not only for the lifting of sanctions, but also the future of the Iran deal. The IAEA findings will likely be met with fierce criticism from Republicans and Democrats opposed to the nuclear deal and redoubling of efforts stop the lifting of sanctions against the Islamic Republic as stipulated in the agreement.

The report is expected to be raised at upcoming House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the “brutal and destabilizing role of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.” The IRGC plays a central role in Iran’s ballistic missile and nuclear programs, as well as military activity in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. The IRGC also trains and supports Hezbollah and Hamas. The Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ed Royce, ironically calls the $100B + that Iran will received from the implementing the Iranian nuclear deal a “stimulus package” for the IRGC.

Will the Obama administration challenge the IAEA to get to the bottom of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program history or give the regime a pass to avoid a collapse of the agreement it worked so hard to sell to the American people? P5 negotiator Russia, which is cooperating with Iran in supporting the government of President Assad in Syria, wants the Security Council to immediately lift economic sanctions.

Addressing the IAEA Board of Governors last week in Vienna, Director General Yukiya Amano conceded that his organizations is “not in a position to provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in Iran, and therefore to conclude that all nuclear material in Iran is in peaceful activities.”

Amano’s inconclusive remark is expected to be the theme of the IAEA report, which he has already admitted will not be “black and white.”