

Iran Answers Questions on Explosives

To get elected chief of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 2009, Yukiya Amano agreed to carry water for the U.S. on the Iranian nuclear issue, a chore that he is continuing in a dispute over Iran's work on detonators, as Gareth Porter explains for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, says the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should now close its investigation of the issue of Iran's development of high explosives detonators that the IAEA has said may have been part of a covert nuclear weapons program.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano has thus far refused to close the file on the issue, which is the first one that Iran and the IAEA had agreed to resolve as part of an agreement on the question of what the Agency calls "possible military dimensions" of the Iranian nuclear program.

In an interview with IPS in his office in Tehran, Salehi said the IAEA should have ended the investigation of the detonator issue in keeping with an understanding that he claimed had been reached between the two sides on procedures for carrying out the February 2014 "Framework for Cooperation" agreement.

Referring to IAEA officials, Salehi said, "To the best of my knowledge and the best of my information, they have come up with the conclusion that what Iran has said is consistent with their findings."

The use of the term "consistent with" the IAEA's information from all other sources would be identical to the formulation used by the IAEA in closing its inquiry into six "unresolved issues" that Iran and the IAEA agreed to resolve in an August 2007 "Work Program".

Salehi said the IAEA had agreed to do the same thing in regard to the issues included in the "Framework for Cooperation" agreement.

"We have agreed that once our explanations were enough to bring this to conclusion they would have to close that issue," said the U.S.-educated Salehi. "They should not keep the issue open."

The most recent IAEA report, dated May 23, confirmed that Iran had shown the Agency documents supporting the Iranian contention that it had carried out exploding bridge-wire (EBW) experiments for civilian applications rather than as part of a nuclear weapons program.

Reuters had reported May 20 that the IAEA had requested that Iran provide “verification documents” to support Iran’s claim that it had a valid reason for developing an EBW detonator program.

But a “senior official close to the Iran dossier” meaning a senior IAEA official was quoted by The Telegraph on May 23 as claiming it was “still too early “to say that the information was “credible.”

The Agency was obviously capable of reaching an assessment of the credibility of the information within a relatively short time. But Amano declared in a June 2 press conference that the IAEA would provide an assessment of its investigation on the EBW issue “in due course, after a good understanding of the whole picture.”

Unlike the August 2007 Work Plan, which resulted in the IAEA closing the files on six different issues that had been open nearly five years, the February 2014 “Framework” agreement has not been made public. So Salehi’s claim could not be independently confirmed.

But when asked for the IAEA’s response to Salehi’s statements that the Agency had agreed to close the investigation of an issue once Iran had provided the needed information and had accepted the validity of Iran’s explanation, Amano’s spokesperson, Gill Tudor, did not address either of these statements directly.

In an email to IPS on Thursday, she said, “As the Director General has made clear, the Agency’s approach is to consider each issue and then provide an assessment after we have a good understanding of the whole picture.”

Amano’s declaration was clearly intended to indicate that he has no intention of clearing Iran of the suspicion on the EBW program until the larger issue of “possible military dimensions” of Iran’s nuclear program is resolved. The spokesperson’s refusal to deny Salehi’s assertions implies that they accurately reflect both the unpublished “Framework” agreement and what IAEA officials told the Iranians on May 20.

Amano appears to be holding back on his official acceptance of Iran’s documentation on this and other issues until an agreement is reached between Iran and the P5+1. The “possible military dimensions” issue, which involves the authenticity of the large collection of documents said to have come from an alleged secret Iranian nuclear weapons research program from 2001 to 2003, is not likely to be resolved any time soon.

Amano had pledged to support the U.S. policy toward Iran in return for U.S. support for his candidacy to replace then IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei in 2009, according to a diplomatic cable released by Wikileaks. Since

taking over in November 2009, he has not deviated from the U.S and P5+1 position that Iran has had a nuclear weapons program in the past. [See Consortiumnews.com's ["Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?"](#)]

Iran had denounced the documents as fraudulent from the beginning, and ElBaradei and other senior officials believed they were probably forged by a foreign intelligence service, according to published sources. A former IAEA official who asked not to be identified confirmed ElBaradei's belief to IPS. Nevertheless, under pressure from the George W. Bush administration (2001-2009), the IAEA endorsed the documents as "credible," starting with its May 2008 report.

Until Iran showed the documents to IAEA officials last month, the IAEA had taken the position in reports that Iran remains under suspicion because it had acknowledged having carried out a program of EBW research and development for civilian and conventional military applications but had not provided proof of those applications.

In its first reference to the issue, the May 2008 IAEA report said Iran had "acknowledged that it had conducted simultaneous testing with two to three EBW detonators with a time precision of about one microsecond" but that "this was intended for civil and conventional military applications." The report thus led the reader to infer that Iran had acknowledged the authenticity of parts or all of the documents on the EBW studies they had been asked to explain and had sought to describe them as having non-nuclear applications.

But the report failed to clarify that the experiments outlined in the document under investigation had involved EBW detonators firing at a rate of 130 nanoseconds eight times faster than the ones Iran had acknowledged, as had been revealed by then Deputy Director General Olli Heinonen in a February 2008 briefing for member states.

Based on the false premise that Iran had admitted to carrying out the experiments shown in the intelligence documents, the IAEA demanded that Iran provide the details of its EBW development program and allow visits to the site where Iran conducted testing of its EBW experiments.

The objective of that demand appears to have been to provoke a rejection by Iran which could then be cited as evidence of non-cooperation. When Iran refused to provide information on its conventional military applications of EBW technology, which were obviously secret, the Barack Obama administration and its allies used it to justify new international economic sanctions against Iran.

The idea that Iran was obliged to prove that it had a legitimate non-nuclear need for EBW technology was disingenuous. Iran's development of anti-ship

missiles is well documented, as is the fact that such weapons use EBW technology for their firing mechanisms.

Iran apparently resolved the issue by providing documentary evidence of one or more civilian applications of EBW technology in Iran.

Gareth Porter is an independent investigative journalist and winner of the 2012 Gellhorn Prize for journalism. He is the author of the newly published *Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*.

A Poison Pill for Iran Nuke Talks

Israel and its hardline U.S. backers have tried to manipulate the UN's IAEA to ensure failure of negotiations aimed at constraining but not eliminating Iran's nuclear program. The new ploy is to sink the talks with a demand for an Iranian "confession," as Gareth Porter wrote for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

President Barack Obama's administration appears to have rejected a deal-breaking demand by Israel for an Iranian confession to having had a covert nuclear weapons program as a condition for completing the comprehensive nuclear agreement.

Pro-Israeli commentators have openly criticized the Obama administration for failing to explicitly demand that Iran confess to charges by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of a covert nuclear weapons program.

Demanding such a confession would be an obvious deal-breaker, because Iran has consistently denied those past charges and denounced the documents and intelligence reports on which they were based as fraudulent. In fact, the failure of the talks appears to be precisely the Israeli intention in pressing Washington to make that demand.

All the intelligence in question can be traced back to Israel, and investigation of the material has shown that the documents and reports that have been most widely publicized betray multiple indications of having been fabricated, as reported by IPS.

A "senior administration official" told reporters after the Nov. 24 Joint Plan of Action was announced that the United States had "made clear" in the negotiations that "the Security Council resolutions must still be addressed and

that Iran must come into compliance with its obligations under the NPT and its obligations to the IAEA.”

The U.N. Security Council Resolution 1929 of Jun. 9, 2010 says Iran “shall cooperate with the IAEA on all outstanding issues, particularly those which give rise to concerns about the possible military dimensions of the Iranian nuclear program.”

The term “possible military dimensions” had been used by the IAEA in referring to the claims publicized by the agency over the past six years of covert Iranian nuclear weapons development projects, including an alleged facility at Parchin for testing nuclear weapons designs.

The Obama administration thus seemed to suggest that some kind of Iranian admission to past nuclear weapons work is a condition for a final agreement. But the administration’s rhetoric on resolving IAEA claims of a nuclear weapons program appears to be less about forcing Iran to confess than responding to pressures from Israel and its supporters in the United States.

The first explicit indication of Israeli pressure on Obama to demand an Iranian confession as part of any diplomatic settlement came in a September 2012 article by Patrick Clawson and David Makovsky, then both senior staff members of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), whose analysis and recommendations reflect Israeli government policy.

“Given Iran’s past undeclared activities,” Clawson and Makovsky wrote, “a particular concern is that Iran will develop clandestine nuclear facilities. Tehran’s coming clean about the past will therefore be an important determinant of whether it has any hidden capabilities.”

The demand that Iran “come clean” on its alleged nuclear weapons program entered into the Obama administration’s public posture for the first time after consultations with Israel in advance of the October 2013 round of negotiations with Iran.

Secretary of State John Kerry declared in Tokyo on Oct. 3 that Iran would “have to prove it’s willing to come clean about the nuclear program.” That same day, Ambassador James Jeffrey, a senior fellow at WINEP, in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Iran “must come clean on its nuclear-related military research”.

By the time the negotiations on the joint Plan of Action were completed in November, however, the State Department adopted language on the issue that harkened back to Kerry’s testimony at his Senate confirmation hearings in January 2013. Kerry had said then that “questions surrounding Iran’s nuclear

weapons program" had to be "resolved".

It quickly became apparent that Israel had wanted the United States to demand not only a pro forma confession by Iran but the details of its alleged work on nuclear weapons. On the very day the agreement was announced, however, Robert Satloff, the executive director of WINEP, expressed his unhappiness that the deal did not include "getting Iran to come clean on all its past clandestine programs."

Also on Nov. 24, in the Wall Street Journal, Mark Dubowitz and Orde Kittrie of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, which is well known for expressing Israeli policy on Iran, criticized the Joint Plan of Action for failing to "make clear reference to Iran revealing its past nuclear weapons research."

The following day, again in the Wall Street Journal, WINEP managing director Michael Singh objected to the same U.S. failure to demand all the details of Iranian work on nuclear weapons. "Without insight into the full extent of Iran's clandestine nuclear activities," Singh wrote, "no amount of monitoring and inspection can provide confidence that Iran lacks a parallel program beyond the inspectors' view."

Along with Kerry's initial adoption of the "come clean" rhetoric, these sharp criticisms of the U.S. refusal to call explicitly for a confession indicate that the Obama administration had initially gone along with Israel in calling for Iran to "come clean" but concluded that such a demand risked a premature breakdown in the talks.

Since the interim agreement, moreover, the State Department has avoided language that would commit it to requiring anything resembling an Iranian confession. In Israel on Feb. 22, Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman, who is the primary negotiator with Iran, said, "What we have said to Iran is that [the 'possible military dimensions' issue] will have to be addressed in some way."

Sherman suggested for the first time the possibility of a less than complete and clear-cut outcome of the process. The IAEA was "very much focused on working through PMD with Iran," said Sherman. "And the more Iran can do with the IAEA, which is where this belongs, the more likely we will have successful comprehensive agreement."

A former U.S. official who had worked on Iran suggested in a recent off-the-record meeting that the "possible military dimensions" issue could not be resolved completely, but that one or more parts could be clarified satisfactorily. The rest could be left for resolution by the IAEA after the

comprehensive agreement is signed, the ex-official said.

That possibility arises because Iran and the IAEA agreed in February to work on the "Exploding Bridgewire" (EBW) issue the claim published by the IAEA that Iran had carried out experiments on high explosives developed for the purpose of detonating a nuclear weapon. That claim was based on a document that was part of the large collection originally said by anonymous intelligence sources to have come from the laptop computer of a participant in a purported Iranian nuclear weapons research project.

The documents were actually turned over to German intelligence by the Iranian terrorist organization Mujahedin-E-Khalq, which had close links to Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad.

Iran provided the IAEA with an account of its actual EBW development program in 2008. The Iranian account, cited by the agency in its May 2008 report, indicated the rate of explosions in its experiments, which was just one-eighth the rate mentioned by then IAEA deputy director Olli Heinonen in a briefing for member states in 2008.

But instead of acknowledging that fact in its report, the IAEA suggested repeatedly that Iran had acknowledged carrying out the EBW experiments described in the purported document from the secret weapons program while claiming it was for non-nuclear applications.

The new Iran-IAEA agreement on the EBW issue raises the question of whether IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano is now ready to reach a deal with Iran, despite having staked his own reputation on the November 2011 report on intelligence claims of covert Iranian nuclear weapons research coming from Israel.

Such an agreement might be based on the IAEA's stating accurately the Iranian explanation for the EBW and thus implicitly admitting that the agency had distorted the issue in the past. Other issues might be left to be resolved quietly after the negotiations on a comprehensive agreement are completed.

Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specialising in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. His new book is Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare.

Did Manning Help Avert War in Iran?

From the Archive: Many of the world's crises, like those in Syria and Ukraine, can be better understood by factoring in Israel's maneuvers to involve the U.S. in bombing Iran. Documents leaked by Pvt. Manning exposed how one such scheme might have played out, as Robert Parry wrote in 2013.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Aug. 19, 2013)

From U.S. embassy cables leaked by Pvt. Bradley (now Chelsea) Manning, you can easily imagine how the propaganda game might have played out, how Americans could have been panicked into supporting another unnecessary war in the Middle East, this time against Iran. Except that Manning's release of the documents spoiled the trick.

The gambit might have gone this way: One morning, a story would have led the front page of, say, the Washington Post citing how the widely respected International Atomic Energy Agency and its honest-broker Director-General Yukiya Amano had found startling "evidence" that Iran was nearing a nuclear bomb despite a longstanding U.S. intelligence estimate to the contrary and despite Iranian denials.

Next, the neocon-dominated opinion pages would ridicule anyone who still doubted these "facts." After all, these articles would say, "even" the IAEA, which had challenged President George W. Bush's claims about Iraq in 2002, and "even" Amano, who had initially believed Iran's denials, were now convinced.

Neo-con think tanks would rush to join the chorus of alarm, dispatching WMD "experts" to TV talk shows bracing the American people on the need for military action. From Fox News to CNN to MSNBC, there would be a drumbeat about Iran's perfidy. Then, as hawkish Republicans and Democrats ratcheted up their rhetoric and as Israeli leaders chortled "we told you so" the war-with-Iran bandwagon might have begun rolling with such velocity that it would be unstoppable.

Perhaps, only years later after grave human costs and severe economic repercussions would the American people learn the truth: that the IAEA under Amano wasn't the objective source that they had been led to believe, that Amano was something of a U.S.-Israeli puppet who had feigned a pro-Iranian position early on to burnish his credentials for pushing an anti-Iranian line subsequently; that after he was installed, he had even solicited U.S. officials for money and had held secret meetings with Israelis (to coordinate opposition to Iran's nuclear program while maintaining a polite silence about Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal).

However, because of the actions of Pvt. Manning, the rug was pulled out from under this possible ruse. The U.S. embassy cables revealing the truth about Amano were published by the U.K. Guardian in 2011 (although ignored by the New York Times, the Washington Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets). The cables also drew attention from Web sites, such as Consortiumnews.com.

So, the gambit could not work. If it had been tried, enough people would have known the truth. They wouldn't be fooled again and they would have alerted their fellow citizens. Pvt. Manning had armed them with the facts.

And this scenario, while hypothetical, is not at all far-fetched. When the cables were leaked about a year after Amano's appointment, his IAEA was busy feeding the hysteria over Iran's nuclear program with reports trumpeted by think tanks, such as the Institute for Science and International Security, and by the Washington Post and other U.S. news media.

Revealing Cables

According to those leaked U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the site of IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance U.S. interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't; Amano credited his election to U.S. government support; Amano signaled he would side with the United States in its confrontation with Iran; and he stuck his hand out for more U.S. money.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

The appreciative Amano informed Pyatt that as IAEA director general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and he "saw his primary role as implementing safeguards and UNSC [United Nations Security Council]/Board resolutions," i.e. U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Amano also discussed how to restructure the senior ranks of the IAEA, including elimination of one top official and the retention of another. "We wholly agree with Amano's assessment of these two advisors and see these decisions as positive first signs," Pyatt commented.

In return, Pyatt made clear that Amano could expect strong U.S. financial support, stating that "the United States would do everything possible to support his successful tenure as Director General and, to that end, anticipated that continued U.S. voluntary contributions to the IAEA would be forthcoming. Amano

offered that a 'reasonable increase' in the regular budget would be helpful."

Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli "immediately after his appointment" and that Michaeli "was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues." Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano's public remarks about there being "no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability" as just words that Amano felt he had to say "to persuade those who did not support him about his 'impartiality.'"

In private, Amano agreed to "consultations" with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, Pyatt reported. (It is ironic indeed that Amano would have secret contacts with Israeli officials about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, which has yet to yield a single bomb, when Israel possesses a large and undeclared nuclear arsenal.)

In another leaked cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano "took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

"More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain 'constructive ambiguity' about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December" 2009.

In other words, Amano was a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel regarding Iran's nuclear program. Amano's behavior surely contrasted with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush's key claims about Iraq's supposed nuclear weapons program, correctly denouncing some documents as forgeries.

[Pyatt, who was the chief contact with Amano, is now U.S. ambassador to Ukraine and was a key figure, working with neocon Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland, in orchestrating the violent coup that overthrew the democratically elected President Viktor Yanukovich in February and touched off a confrontation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Barack Obama, a clash that disrupted their cooperation in trying arrange a peaceful resolution to the Iran-nuclear issue. For details, see Consortiumnews.com's "What Neocons Want from Ukraine Crisis."]

Salvaging Some Hype

Though Manning's release of the embassy cables apparently scotched any large-scale deployment of the Amano ploy, some elements of the gambit did go forward

nonetheless, albeit with less oomph than they might have had.

In February 2013, the front page of the Washington Post offered a taste of what the propaganda campaign might have looked like when investigative reporter Joby Warrick hyped an account about Iran's nuclear program pushed by David Albright, director of the Institute for Science and International Security who had lent support to Bush's invasion of Iraq a decade ago.

The Albright/Warrick alarm cited Iran's alleged effort to place an Internet order for 100,000 ring-shaped magnets that would work in some of the country's older centrifuges.

"Iran recently sought to acquire tens of thousands of highly specialized magnets used in centrifuge machines, according to experts and diplomats, a sign that the country may be planning a major expansion of its nuclear program that could shorten the path to an atomic weapons capability," Warrick wrote in his lede paragraph.

You had to read to the end of the long story to hear a less strident voice, saying that Iran had previously informed IAEA inspectors that it planned to build more of its old and clunkier centrifuges, which use this sort of magnet, and that the enrichment was for civilian energy, not a nuclear bomb.

"Olli Heinonen, who led IAEA nuclear inspections inside Iran before his retirement in 2010, said the type of magnet sought by Iran was highly specific to the IR-1 centrifuge and could not, for example, be used in the advanced IR-2M centrifuges that Iran has recently tested," according to the final paragraphs of Warrick's article.

"The numbers in the order make sense, because Iran originally told us it wanted to build more than 50,000 of the IR-1s,' Heinonen said. 'The failure rate on these machines is 10 percent a year, so you need a surplus.'"

At the bottom of Warrick's story, you'd also learn that "Iran has avoided what many experts consider Israel's new 'red line': a stockpile of medium-enriched uranium greater than 530 pounds, roughly the amount needed to build a weapon if further purified."

So there was nothing urgent or particularly provocative about this alleged purchase, though the structure and placement of the Post story suggested otherwise. Many readers likely were expected to simply jump to the conclusion that Iran was on the verge of building an atomic bomb and that it was time for President Barack Obama to join Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in another Middle East war.

The pressure from the Post and other neocon-leaning news outlets on the Obama administration to fall in line with Netanyahu's belligerence toward Iran has been building for years, often with Warrick channeling anti-Iranian propaganda from Albright and his ISIS, which, in turn, seems to be a pipeline for hardliners at the IAEA.

A decade ago, Albright and the ISIS were key figures in stoking the hysteria for invading Iraq around the false allegations of its WMD program. In recent years, Albright and his institute have adopted a similar role regarding Iran and its purported pursuit of a nuclear weapon, even though U.S. intelligence agencies say Iran terminated that weapons project in 2003.

Nevertheless, Albright has transformed his organization into a sparkplug for a new confrontation with Iran. Though Albright insists that he is an objective professional, ISIS has published hundreds of articles about Iran, which has not produced a single nuclear bomb, while barely mentioning Israel's rogue nuclear arsenal.

An examination of the ISIS Web site reveals only a few technical articles relating to Israel's nukes while ISIS has expanded its coverage of Iran's nuclear program so much that it's been moved onto a separate Web site. The articles not only hype developments in Iran but also attack U.S. media critics who question the fear-mongering about Iran.

More than a year ago when a non-mainstream journalist confronted Albright about the disparity between ISIS's concentration on Iran and *de minimis* coverage of Israel, he angrily responded that he was working on a report about Israel's nuclear program. But there is still no substantive assessment of Israel's large nuclear arsenal on the ISIS Web site, which goes back to 1993.

Despite this evidence of bias, the Post and other mainstream U.S. news outlets typically present Albright as a neutral analyst. They also ignore his checkered past, for instance, his prominent role in promoting President Bush's pre-invasion case that Iraq possessed stockpiles of WMD.

Stoking a War

At the end of summer 2002, as Bush was beginning his advertising roll-out for the Iraq invasion and dispatching his top aides to the Sunday talk shows to warn about "smoking guns" and "mushroom clouds," Albright co-authored a Sept. 10, 2002, article entitled "Is the Activity at Al Qaim Related to Nuclear Efforts?" which declared:

"High-resolution commercial satellite imagery shows an apparently operational facility at the site of Iraq's al Qaim phosphate plant and uranium extraction

facility This site was where Iraq extracted uranium for its nuclear weapons program in the 1980s. This image raises questions about whether Iraq has rebuilt a uranium extraction facility at the site, possibly even underground. The uranium could be used in a clandestine nuclear weapons effort.”

Albright’s alarming allegations fit neatly with Bush’s propaganda barrage, although as the months wore on with Bush’s warnings about aluminum tubes and yellowcake from Africa growing more outlandish Albright did display more skepticism about the existence of a revived Iraqi nuclear program.

Still, he remained a “go-to” expert on other Iraqi purported WMD, such as chemical and biological weapons. In a typical quote on Oct. 5, 2002, Albright told CNN: “In terms of the chemical and biological weapons, Iraq has those now.”

After Bush launched the Iraq invasion in March 2003 and Iraq’s secret WMD caches didn’t materialize, Albright admitted that he had been conned, explaining to the Los Angeles Times: “If there are no weapons of mass destruction, I’ll be mad as hell. I certainly accepted the administration claims on chemical and biological weapons. I figured they were telling the truth. If there is no [unconventional weapons program], I will feel taken, because they asserted these things with such assurance.” [See FAIR’s [“The Great WMD Hunt,”](#)]

Given the horrendous costs in blood and treasure resulting from the Iraq fiasco, an objective journalist might feel compelled to mention Albright’s track record of bias and error. But the Post’s Warrick didn’t, even though Albright and his ISIS were at the core of the February story, receiving credit for obtaining copies of the magnet purchase order.

So, while we’ll never know if the Amano ploy would have been tried since Manning’s disclosures made it unfeasible it surely would not have been unprecedented. The American people experienced similar deceptions during the run-up to war with Iraq when the Bush-43 administration assembled every scrap of suspicion about Iraq’s alleged WMD and fashioned a bogus case for war.

Eventually, Manning was pulled into that war as a young intelligence analyst. He confronted so much evidence of brutality and dishonesty that he felt compelled to do something about it. What he did in leaking hundreds of thousands of documents to WikiLeaks and, thus, to other news outlets was to supply “ground truth” about war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan.

His disclosure of diplomatic cables also gave the American people and the world a glimpse behind the curtain of secrecy that often conceals the dirty dealings of statecraft. Perhaps most significantly, those revelations helped sparked the Arab Spring, giving people of the Middle East a chance to finally take some

political control over their own lives.

And, by letting Americans in on the truth about Amano's IAEA, Bradley Manning may have helped prevent a war with Iran.

[Pvt. Manning is now serving a 35-year prison sentence for unauthorized release of classified material.]

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry's trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America's Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

US Blocks Release of Iran Nuke Papers

U.S. officials have put up roadblocks to stop the International Atomic Energy Agency from sharing documents with Iran regarding its alleged nuclear weaponization, creating an obstacle to negotiations, writes Gareth Porter for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

The Barack Obama administration has demanded that Iran resolve "past and present concerns" about the "possible military dimensions" of its nuclear program as a condition for signing a comprehensive nuclear agreement with Tehran.

Administration officials have suggested that Iran must satisfy the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regarding the allegations in the agency's report that it has had a covert nuclear weapons program in the past.

But the record of negotiations between Iran and the IAEA shows Tehran has been ready for the past two years to provide detailed responses to all the charges of an Iranian nuclear weapons work, and that the problem has been the refusal of the IAEA to share with Iran the documentary evidence on which those allegations have been based.

The real obstacle to providing those documents, however, has long been a U.S. policy of refusing to share the documents on the assumption that Iran must confess to having had a weaponization program.

The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, Ali Akbar Salehi, declared on Feb. 12, "The authenticity of each allegation should be proven first, then the person who submitted it to the agency should give us the genuine document. When we are assured of the authenticity, then we can talk to the agency."

Neither the IAEA nor the Obama administration has responded publicly to Salehi's statement. In response to a query from Inter Press Service (IPS), the spokesperson for the National Security Council, Bernadette Meehan, said the NSC officials would have no comment on the Iranian demand for access to the documents.

The spokesperson for IAEA Director Yukiya Amano did not answer a request from IPS on Thursday for the agency's comment.

But a draft text of an agreement being negotiated between the IAEA and Iran dated Feb. 20, 2012, shows that the only difference between the two sides on resolving issues about allegations of Iranian nuclear weapons work was Iran's demand to have the documents on which the allegations are based.

The draft text, which was later published on the website of the Arms Control Association, reflects Iran's deletions and additions to the original IAEA proposal. It calls for Iran to provide a "conclusive technical assessment" of a set of six "topics", which included 12 distinct charges in the report in a particular order that the IAEA desired.

Iran and the IAEA agreed that Iran would provide a "conclusive technical assessment" on a list of 10 issues in a particular order. The only topics that Iran proposed to delete from the list were "management structure" and "procurement activities," which did not involve charges of specifically nuclear weapons work.

The two sides had agreed in the draft that the IAEA would provide a "detailed explanation of its concerns". But they had failed to agree on provision of documents to Iran by the IAEA. The IAEA had proposed language that the agency would provide Iran with the relevant documents only "where appropriate." Iran was insisting on deletion of that qualifying phrase from the draft.

The first priority on the list of topics to which both sides had agreed in the draft was "Parchin" referring to the claim of intelligence from an unnamed state that Iran had installed a large cylinder at the Parchin military reservation.

A November 2011 IAEA report suggested the cylinder was intended for testing nuclear weapons designs and had been built with the assistance of a "foreign expert." Iran also agreed to respond in detail on the issue of the "foreign expert," who has been identified as Vyacheslav Danilenko, a Ukrainian specialist

on nanodiamonds.

The evidence associated with that claim and others published in the 2011 report shows that they were based on intelligence reports and documents given to the IAEA by Israel in 2008-09. Former IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei referred to a series of documents provided by Israel in his 2012 memoirs.

Iran also agreed to respond in detail to allegations that Iran had sought to integrate a nuclear weapon into the reentry vehicle of the Shahab-3 missile, and that it had developed high explosives as a "detonator" for a nuclear weapon.

Both alleged activities had been depicted or described in documents reported in the U.S. news media in 2005-06 as having come from a covert Iranian nuclear weapons program. Those documents, about whose authenticity ElBaradei and other senior IAEA officials have publicly expressed serious doubts, have now been revealed as having given to Western intelligence by an anti-regime Iranian terrorist organization.

Former senior German foreign office official Karsten Voigt revealed in an interview last year for a newly-published book by this writer that senior officials of the German intelligence agency BND had told him in November 2004 that the BND had gotten the entire collection of documents from a member of the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) who had been one of their sources, and that they did not consider the source to be reliable.

The MEK, considered by the United States and European states as a terrorist organization, had been used by Saddam Hussein's regime to support the war against Iran and by Israel to issue intelligence and propaganda that Mossad did not want attributed to it.

ElBaradei, who retired from the IAEA in November 2009, had declared repeatedly that sharing the documents was necessary to ensure "due process" in resolving the issue, but the United States had prevented him from doing so. In his final statement to the Board of Governors on Sept. 7, 2009, he appealed to "those who provided the information related to the alleged weaponization studies to share with Iran as much information as possible."

A former IAEA official, who asked not to be identified, told IPS that the United States had allowed only a very limited number of documents to be shown to Iran in the form of Power Point slides projected on a screen.

A May 2008 IAEA report described a number of documents purported to be from the Iranian weapons program but said that the IAEA "was not in possession of the documents and was therefore unfortunately unable to make them available to Iran."

Around 100 pages of documents were given by the United States to the agency to share with Iran, the former official said, but none of the documents described in the report were among them.

The U.S. policy of denying Iranian access to the documents continued during the Obama administration, as shown by a U.S. diplomatic cable from Vienna dated April 29, 2009, and released by WikiLeaks. At a P5+1 technical meeting, both U.S. and IAEA officials were quoted as implying that the objective of the policy was to press Iran to confess to the activities portrayed in the papers.

U.S. officials said that a failure by Iran to “disclose any past weaponization-related work” would “suggest Iran wishes to hide and pursue its past work, perhaps to keep a future weapons option”.

IAEA Safeguards Chief Olli Heinonen made it clear that no copies of the relevant documents charging Iran with weaponization would be provided to Iran and complained that Iran had continued to claim that the documents were fabricated. In its report of Nov. 14, 2013, the IAEA said it had received more information presumably from Israel that “corroborates the analysis” in its 2011 report.

The past unwillingness of the Obama administration to entertain the possibility that the documents provided by the MEK were fabricated or to allow Iran the opportunity to prove that through close analysis of the documents, and the IAEA’s continued commitment to the weaponization information it has published suggest that the issue of past claims will be just as contentious as the technical issues to be negotiated, if not more so.

[For more on the IAEA’s conflicts of interest, see Consortiumnews.com’s “[Did Manning Help Avert War on Iran?](#)”]

Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specialising in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. His new book [Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare](#), was published Feb. 14.

How Misread Cables Fed Iran Hysteria

Official Washington saw how bad intelligence led to the disastrous Iraq War, but U.S. analysts and “experts” like David Albright charged down the same path on Iran’s alleged nuclear program. Again, key “evidence” collapsed under scrutiny, Gareth Porter wrote for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

When Western intelligence agencies began in the early 1990s to intercept telexes from an Iranian university to foreign high technology firms, intelligence analysts believed they saw the first signs of military involvement in Iran's nuclear program. That suspicion led to U.S. intelligence assessments over the next decade that Iran was secretly pursuing nuclear weapons.

The supposed evidence of military efforts to procure uranium enrichment equipment shown in the telexes was also the main premise of the International Atomic Energy Agency's investigation of Iran's nuclear program from 2003 through 2007.

But the interpretation of the intercepted telexes on which later assessments were based turned out to have been a fundamental error. The analysts, eager to find evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program, had wrongly assumed that the combination of interest in technologies that could be used in a nuclear program and the apparent role of a military-related institution meant that the military was behind the procurement requests.

In 2007-08, Iran provided hard evidence that the technologies had actually been sought by university teachers and researchers. The intercepted telexes that set in train the series of U.S. intelligence assessments that Iran was working on nuclear weapons were sent from Sharif University of Technology in Tehran beginning in late 1990 and continued through 1992.

The dates of the telexes, their specific procurement requests and the telex number of PHRC were all revealed in a February 2012 paper by David Albright, the executive director of the Institute for Science and International Security, and two co-authors.

The telexes that interested intelligence agencies following them all pertained to dual-use technologies, meaning that they were consistent with work on uranium conversion and enrichment but could also be used for non-nuclear applications. But what raised acute suspicions on the part of intelligence analysts was the fact that those procurement requests bore the telex number of the Physics Research Center (PHRC), which was known to have contracts with the Iranian military.

U.S., British, German and Israeli foreign intelligence agencies were sharing raw intelligence on Iranian efforts to procure technology for its nuclear program, according to published sources. The telexes included requests for "high-vacuum" equipment, "ring" magnets, a balancing machine and cylinders of fluorine gas, all of which were viewed as useful for a program of uranium conversion and

enrichment.

The Schenck balancing machine ordered in late 1990 or early 1991 provoked interest among proliferation analysts, because it could be used to balance the rotor assembly parts on the P1 centrifuge for uranium enrichment. The "ring" magnets sought by the university were believed to be appropriate for centrifuge production. The request for 45 cylinders of fluorine gas was considered suspicious, because fluorine is combined with uranium to produce uranium hexafluoride, the form of uranium that used for enrichment.

The first indirect allusion to evidence from the telexes in the news came in late 1992, when an official of the George H. W. Bush administration told The Washington Post that the administration had pushed for a complete cutoff of all nuclear-related technology to Iran, because of what was called "a suspicious procurement pattern."

Then the Iranian efforts to obtain those specific technologies from major foreign suppliers were reported, without mentioning the intercepted telexes, in a Public Broadcasting System "Frontline" documentary called "Iran and the Bomb" broadcast in April 1993, which portrayed them as clear indications of an Iranian nuclear weapons program. The producer of the documentary, Herbert Krosney, described the Iranian procurement efforts in similar terms in his book *Deadly Business* published the same year.

In 1996, President Bill Clinton's CIA Director John Deutch declared, "A wide variety of data indicate that Tehran has assigned civilian and military organizations to support the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons."

For the next decade, the CIA's non-proliferation specialists continued to rely on their analysis of the telexes to buttress their assessment that Iran was developing nuclear weapons. The top-secret 2001 National Intelligence Estimate bore the title "Iran Nuclear Weapons Program: Multifaceted and Poised to Succeed, but When?"

Former IAEA Deputy Director General for Safeguards Olli Heinonen recalled in a May 2012 article that the IAEA had obtained a "set of procurement information about the PHRC" an obvious reference to the collection of telexes which led him to launch an investigation in 2004 of what the IAEA later called the "Procurement activities by the former Head of PHRC."

But after an August 2007 agreement between Iran and IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei on a timetable for the resolution of "all remaining issues," Iran provided full information on all the procurement issues the IAEA had

raised. That information revealed that the former PHRC head, Sayyed Abbas Shahmoradi-Zavareh, who had been a professor at Sharif University at the time, had been asked by several faculty departments to help procure equipment or material for teaching and research.

Iran produced voluminous evidence to support its explanation for each of the procurement efforts the IAEA had questioned. It showed that the high vacuum equipment had been requested by the Physics Department for student experiments in evaporation and vacuum techniques for producing thin coatings by providing instruction manuals on the experiments, internal communications and even the shipping documents on the procurement.

The Physics Department had also requested the magnets for students to carry out "Lenz-Faraday experiments," according to the evidence provided, including the instruction manuals, the original requests for funding and the invoice for cash sales from the supplier. The balancing machine was for the Mechanical Engineering Department, as was supported by similar documentation turned over to the IAEA. IAEA inspectors had also found that the machine was indeed located at the department.

The 45 cylinders of fluorine that Shahmoradi-Zavareh had tried to procure had been requested by the Office of Industrial Relations for research on the chemical stability of polymeric vessels, as shown by the original request letter and communications between the former PHRC head and the president of the university.

The IAEA report on February 2008 recorded the detailed documentation provided by Iran on each of the issues, none of which was challenged by the IAEA. The report declared the issue "no longer outstanding at this stage," despite U.S. pressure on ElBaradei to avoid closing that or any other issue in the work program, as reported in diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks.

The IAEA report showed that the primary intelligence basis for the U.S. charge of an Iranian nuclear weapons program for more than a decade had been erroneous.

That dramatic development in the Iran nuclear story went unnoticed in news media reporting on the IAEA report, however. By then the U.S. government, the IAEA and the news media had raised other evidence that was more dramatic a set of documents supposedly purloined from an Iran laptop computer associated with an alleged covert Iranian nuclear weapons program from 2001 to 2003. And the November 2007 NIE had concluded that Iran had been running such a program but had halted it in 2003.

Despite the clear acceptance of the Iranian explanation by the IAEA, David

Albright of ISIS has continued to argue that the telexes support suspicions that Iran's Defense Ministry was involved in the nuclear program.

In his February 2012 paper, Albright discusses the procurement requests documented in the telexes as though the IAEA investigation had been left without any resolution. Albright makes no reference to the detailed documentation provided by Iran in each case or to the IAEA's determination that the issue was "no longer outstanding."

Ten days later, the Washington Post published a news article reflecting Albright's claim that the telexes proved that the PHRC had been guiding Iran's secret uranium enrichment program during the 1990s. The writer was evidently unaware that the February 2008 IAEA report had provided convincing evidence that the intelligence analyst's interpretations had been fundamentally wrong. [For more on Albright, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Hyping Iran Nukes, Again.](#)"]

Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. His new book *Manufactured Crisis: the Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare*, will be published in February 2014. [This story originally appeared at Inter Press Service.]

Iran's Objection to Double Standards

Double standards abound in how the West treats Iran's nuclear program, most notably the silence about Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal. Iran has not built a single bomb and accepts nuclear inspections, yet it is the one confronted with threats of war, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar observes.

By Paul R. Pillar

There are many respects in which a greater effort in the West and in particular the United States to understand Iranian perspectives and sentiments would facilitate more productive Western policies toward Iran, particularly with respect to that country's nuclear program.

There is, for example, the issue of balance in proposed agreements, in which it should be understandable that Tehran opposes a trade that would place major

restrictions on its nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief that would be almost trivial in comparison with the panoply of sanctions imposed on Iran.

There is the comparably understandable Iranian suspicion, in watching behavior by the United States and especially the U.S. Congress, that the United States is only interested in punishing Iran, not negotiating an agreement with it. And there is the natural resistance in Iran, just as there would be in the United States, to caving in to foreign pressure, including threats of military force.

Iran's legal obligations regarding nuclear activities, and how well it has fulfilled those obligations, constitute another area where efforts to understand the Iranians' quite understandable perspective have been sorely lacking. A common catechism in American discourse on this subject is to refer to Iran being in "violation" of those obligations.

But with regard to generally applicable legal obligations that Iran shares with any other party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) or participant in the International Atomic Energy Agency, it would be difficult to make a case that Iran is in violation of anything. There have been some instances in the past of Iranian nuclear activities coming to light before Iran declared them to the IAEA. But those instances have been cleared up, Iran may have intended to make a declaration when the operations in question actually came on line, and tardiness in declarations is hardly an uncommon infraction among other parties to the NPT.

The nuclear activities Iran conducts today, including the enrichment of uranium, are allowed under the international nonproliferation regime and are the object of regular on-site monitoring by the IAEA.

Any mention of "violation" has to refer instead to a series of resolutions by the United Nations Security Council, which demanded that Iran cease enrichment and imposed sanctions when it did not. These resolutions are aimed uniquely against Iran and do not represent an application of generally applicable legal obligations. In short, they are bills of attainder.

What the Security Council has done in this respect it can undo. In fact, it will have to undo it if any agreements on the subject are to be negotiated with Iran. It is the permanent members of the Security Council (plus Germany) that are doing the negotiating. Any formula that included the unique-to-Iran no-enrichment demand, which has no foundation in international law beyond the Security Council resolutions themselves, is a non-starter.

Iran's frustration at being singled out this way while dealing in the obligatory manner with the IAEA comes through in its formal response to the latest IAEA

report on its nuclear activities. The Iranian document is filled with legal fastidiousness, but the Iranians' genuine exasperation is also palpable, being expressed at one place with multiple exclamation points (!!!!!).

One of the most frequent sources of exasperation arises when Iran responds to a question or meets a requirement, only to have the issue at hand re-opened as if Iran had not responded at all.

The background to some of the Iranian complaints is conduct of the IAEA under its current director general, Yukiya Amano, that sometimes makes the agency look, to many eyes, and certainly to those of the Iranians, like a tool of adversaries of Iran. The Iranian response notes how often questions and accusations that the agency directs at Iran originate with material that is fed to it by "known sources hostile to Iran" but is never revealed enough for either Iran or anyone else to question the authenticity of the material itself. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Slanting the Case on Iran Nukes.](#)"]

The response also calls the IAEA to account for evidently sharing on a real-time basis with David Albright's Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security information that was based on inspections of Iranian facilities and was supposed to remain confidential within the IAEA. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Hyping Iran Nukes, Again.](#)"]

Much of the Iranians' heartburn concerns the relationship between the IAEA and the U.N. Security Council and how each has blurred what are supposed to be two distinct charters and missions. On one hand the IAEA has been, in the words of the Iranian response, "more Catholic than the Pope" in seeking to implement Security Council resolutions rather than sticking to what is supposed to be its job of monitoring nuclear safeguards agreements.

On the other hand, the Security Council has waded into the implementation of safeguards agreements even though it has no business doing so if the IAEA has not made a determination, and it has not, that Iran has diverted nuclear material to military purposes or that there is a threat to international peace and security under the terms of the U.N. charter.

The Iranians come back to the U.N. charter near the end of their 20-page response and quote from Article 2 of the charter, which obligates member states to "settle their international disputes by peaceful means" and to "refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations."

The Iranians further note, "Threats to use force against Iran's nuclear

facilities are frequently expressed, including by some permanent members of the Security Council, while the Council has proven to be unable or unwilling to restrain such declarations and compel them to 'refrain in their international relations from the threat.' "

Far shorter than the Iranian response is an Israeli response to a proposal from Arab states to place on the agenda of the IAEA General Conference an item titled "Israeli nuclear capabilities." It's not surprising it is short; after all, what is there to say if you have the region's only nuclear weapons and you don't even admit their existence, as well as staying totally outside any international control and monitoring regime?

The Israelis say a few familiar things about how any attention to what they are doing would be a time-wasting diversion from the "real challenges" in the region, of which Iran and its nuclear program are of course the biggest. "Full compliance by all regional states with their arms control and non-proliferation obligations," declares the Israeli note, is indispensable. That's one way to be preachy about obligations, just don't assume any yourself.

Paul R. Pillar, in his 28 years at the Central Intelligence Agency, rose to be one of the agency's top analysts. He is now a visiting professor at Georgetown University for security studies. (This article first appeared as a blog post at The National Interest's Web site. Reprinted with author's permission.)

Slanting the Case on Iran's Nukes

From the Archive: The New York Times [reports](#) UN nuclear monitoring chief Yukiya Amano is dampening hopes for new nuclear talks with Iran by demanding access to its Parchin military base. But the press still ignores evidence Amano is no honest broker, but part of the U.S./Israel camp, as Robert Parry reported in 2011.

By Robert Parry (Originally published on Nov. 21, 2011. Slightly edited for updating.)

As Washington's political/media class rises up in arms over WMD allegations against Iran, it might be worth recalling how a similar process played out a decade ago when the U.S. public was drawn into a war with Iraq. It wasn't just that George W. Bush told some lies; it was more complicated than that.

In 2002-2003, Official Washington professed a deep faith in the professionalism

of the CIA's analytical division, which accepted enough of the bogus intelligence being pushed by neocon war hawks to create a basis for Bush's invasion of Iraq. Only later did it become clear how politicized the CIA's analysis had become.

Today, a similar role is being played by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, which during the run-up to war with Iraq and under different management was one of the few international bodies with the courage to reject some of Bush's claims about Iraq.

However, in the past few years, the IAEA has become deeply politicized under its new director general, Japanese diplomat Yukiya Amano. Yet, you wouldn't know that from how the U.S. news media is accepting what the IAEA says about Iran, much as the U.S. press corps avoided questioning the CIA's assessments on Iraq.

The evidence of the IAEA's politicization can be found in confidential U.S. diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks and published in 2010 by the Guardian newspaper in the U.K. In those cables, the IAEA's new leadership indicated it was willing to give Washington what it wanted on Iran, just as the CIA's hierarchy bent to Bush's needs on Iraq last decade.

According to the U.S. embassy cables from Vienna, Austria, the IAEA's headquarters, American diplomats in 2009 were cheering the prospect that Amano would advance American interests in ways that outgoing IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei wouldn't.

In a July 9, 2009, cable, American chargé Geoffrey Pyatt said Amano was thankful for U.S. support of his election. "Amano attributed his election to support from the U.S., Australia and France, and cited U.S. intervention with Argentina as particularly decisive," the cable said.

The appreciative Amano informed Pyatt that as IAEA director general, he would take a different "approach on Iran from that of ElBaradei" and he "saw his primary role as implementing safeguards and UNSC [United Nations Security Council]/Board resolutions," i.e. U.S.-driven sanctions and demands against Iran.

Amano also discussed how to restructure the senior ranks of the IAEA, including elimination of one top official and the retention of another. "We wholly agree with Amano's assessment of these two advisors and see these decisions as positive first signs," Pyatt commented.

In return, Pyatt made clear that Amano could expect strong U.S. financial support, stating that "the United States would do everything possible to support his successful tenure as Director General and, to that end, anticipated that

continued U.S. voluntary contributions to the IAEA would be forthcoming. Amano offered that a 'reasonable increase' in the regular budget would be helpful."

Pyatt learned, too, that Amano had consulted with Israeli Ambassador Israel Michaeli "immediately after his appointment" and that Michaeli "was fully confident of the priority Amano accords verification issues." Michaeli added that he discounted some of Amano's public remarks about there being "no evidence of Iran pursuing a nuclear weapons capability" as just words that Amano felt he had to say "to persuade those who did not support him about his 'impartiality.'"

In private, Amano agreed to "consultations" with the head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission, Pyatt reported. (It is ironic indeed that Amano would have secret contacts with Israeli officials about Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, which has yet to yield a single bomb, when Israel ranks as the world's leading rogue nuclear state with a large and undeclared nuclear arsenal.)

'Constructive Ambiguity'

In a subsequent cable dated Oct. 16, 2009, the U.S. mission in Vienna said Amano "took pains to emphasize his support for U.S. strategic objectives for the Agency. Amano reminded ambassador [Glyn Davies] on several occasions that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

"More candidly, Amano noted the importance of maintaining a certain 'constructive ambiguity' about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December" 2009.

In other words, the emerging picture of Amano is of a bureaucrat eager to bend in directions favored by the United States and Israel, especially regarding Iran's nuclear program. Amano's behavior surely contrasts with how the more independent-minded ElBaradei resisted some of Bush's key claims about Iraq's supposed nuclear weapons program, denouncing some documents as forgeries.

The U.K. Guardian observed Amano's cozy relationship with the United States, but major U.S. news outlets have avoided any critical examination of Amano.

Instead, they simply have trumpeted without skepticism IAEA reports critical of Iran. [See Consortiumnews.com's "دآ©jÃ vu Over Iran Nuke Charges" and "Big Media's Double Standards on Iran."]

For instance, the neocon-dominated Washington Post has continued to pump out anti-Iranian propaganda. On Nov. 18, 2011, the Post fronted an article entitled "Iran's role probed in Gaddafi stockpile" suggesting with no solid evidence at all that Iran had supplied Muammar Gaddafi's Libya with artillery shells for

chemical weapons.

Co-produced with the Center for Public Integrity, the Post article said U.S. intelligence is investigating how the shells got to Libya and that “several sources said early suspicion had fallen on Iran. A U.S. official with access to classified information confirmed that there were ‘serious concerns’ that Iran had provided the shells, albeit some years ago.

“In recent weeks, U.N. inspectors [at IAEA] have released new information indicating that Iran has the capability to develop a nuclear bomb, a charge Iranian officials have long rejected. Confirmed evidence of Iran’s provision of the specialized shells may exacerbate international tensions over the country’s alleged pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.”

Troubling Parallel

If any of this is creating a sense of *d’Alembert* vu, with supposedly objective organizations fanning the flames of confrontation based on little hard proof, it’s understandable. A nearly identical process paved the way to war with Iraq. (Over the years, for instance, the Center for Public Integrity has received substantial funding from liberal foundations and thus had credibility with many progressives but later tilted to the right.)

In 2002-2003, the U.S. political/media process was similarly overwhelmed with supposedly objective evidence of Iraq’s pursuit of nuclear bombs and other unconventional weapons, including disclosure from “scientists” defecting from Iraq who were then funneled to U.S. intelligence analysts and journalists by the dissident Iraqi National Congress [INC].

It was not until 2006 when the Senate Intelligence Committee issued a long-awaited *post-mortem* on why the U.S. intelligence community performed so badly regarding Iraq that details were revealed about how the INC shaped the pro-war debate by coaching Iraqi “defectors” how to lie. Amid the powerful “group think” that gripped Official Washington, the lies fed the war fever.

Just like today, it was far easier and safer for politicians and pundits to get all macho against a “designated enemy” in the Middle East than it was to examine the specifics of the WMD claims and risk being called an enemy “apologist.”

After all, what if it turned out that Iraq’s Saddam Hussein had hid stockpiles of chemical or biological weapons? Anyone who had challenged the WMD “group think” would have been identified as a “Saddam stooge” and might never work again.

By contrast, there was almost no career danger if you ran with the pack, even if

it turned out that there were no secret WMD caches. Then, you could simply say that “everyone” was deceived and that no one should be singled out for punishment.

As it turned out with very few exceptions those who pushed disinformation that justified the Iraq War have maintained their esteemed spots in the Washington establishment.

Of course, some people did end up paying a price for the bogus Iraq-WMD “group think” the nearly 4,500 dead U.S. soldiers, the tens of thousands of wounded, and the hundreds of thousands of dead and maimed Iraqis, plus the U.S. taxpayers who got stuck with the bill. But few of those folks attend Georgetown cocktail parties.

Given the self-interest of Washington’s WMD-duped insiders, it shouldn’t come as much of a surprise that the report detailing how the phony WMD case was built got little notice in 2006 when the Senate Intelligence Committee released its finding on how the Iraqi National Congress worked with American neocons to sell the case for war with Iraq.

The History

The official U.S. relationship with these Iraqi exiles dated back to 1991 after President George H.W. Bush had routed Hussein’s army from Kuwait and wanted to help Saddam Hussein’s domestic opponents.

In May 1991, the CIA approached Ahmed Chalabi, a secular Shiite who had not lived in Iraq since 1956. Chalabi was far from a perfect opposition candidate, however. Beyond his long isolation from his homeland, Chalabi was a fugitive from bank fraud charges in Jordan. Still, in June 1992, the Iraqi exiles held an organizational meeting in Vienna out of which came the Iraqi National Congress with Chalabi as the group’s chairman.

But Chalabi soon began rubbing some CIA officers the wrong way. They complained about the quality of his information, the excessive size of his security detail, his lobbying of Congress, and his resistance to working as a team player.

For his part, smooth-talking Chalabi bristled at the idea that he was a U.S. intelligence asset, preferring to see himself as an independent political leader. Nevertheless, he and his organization were not averse to accepting American money.

With U.S. financial backing, the INC waged a propaganda campaign against Hussein and arranged for “a steady stream of low-ranking walk-ins” to provide intelligence about the Iraqi military, the Senate Intelligence Committee report

said.

The INC's mix of duties propaganda and intelligence would create concerns within the CIA as would the issue of Chalabi's "coziness" with the Shiite government of Iran. The CIA concluded that Chalabi was double-dealing both sides when he falsely informed Iran that the United States wanted Iran's help in conducting anti-Hussein operations.

"Chalabi passed a fabricated message from the White House to" an Iranian intelligence officer in northern Iraq, the CIA reported. According to one CIA representative, Chalabi used National Security Council stationery for the fabricated letter, a charge that Chalabi denied.

In December 1996, Clinton administration officials decided to terminate the CIA's relationship with the INC and Chalabi. "There was a breakdown in trust," CIA Director George Tenet later told the Senate Intelligence Committee.

However, in 1998, with the congressional passage of the Iraq Liberation Act, the INC was again one of the exile organizations that qualified for U.S. funding. Starting in March 2000, the State Department agreed to grant an INC foundation almost \$33 million for several programs, including more propaganda operations and collection of information about alleged war crimes committed by Hussein's regime.

By March 2001, with George W. Bush in office and already focusing on Iraq, the INC was given greater leeway to pursue its projects, including an Information Collection Program. The INC's blurred responsibilities on intelligence gathering and propaganda dissemination raised fresh concerns within the State Department. But Bush's National Security Council intervened against State's attempts to cut off funding.

The NSC shifted the INC operation to the control of the Defense Department, where neoconservatives wielded more influence. To little avail, CIA officials warned their counterparts at the Defense Intelligence Agency about suspicions that "the INC was penetrated by Iranian and possibly other intelligence services, and that the INC had its own agenda," the Senate report said.

"You've got a real bucket full of worms with the INC and we hope you're taking the appropriate steps," the CIA told the DIA.

Media Hype

But the CIA's warnings did little to stanch the flow of INC propaganda into America's politics and media. Besides irrigating the U.S. intelligence community with fresh propaganda, the INC funneled a steady stream of "defectors" to U.S.

news outlets eager for anti-Hussein scoops.

The “defectors” also made the rounds of Congress where members saw a political advantage in citing the INC’s propaganda as a way to talk tough about the Middle East. In turn, conservative and neoconservative think tanks honed their reputations in Washington by staying at the cutting edge of the negative news about Hussein, with human rights groups ready to pile on, too, against the Iraqi dictator.

The Bush administration found all this anti-Hussein propaganda fitting perfectly with its international agenda. So the INC’s information program served the institutional needs and biases of Official Washington. Saddam Hussein was a despised figure anyway, with no influential constituency that would challenge even the most outrageous accusations against him.

A war fever was sweeping the United States and the INC was doing all it could to spread the infection. INC’s “defectors” supplied primary or secondary intelligence on two key points in particular, Iraq’s supposed rebuilding of its unconventional weapons and its alleged training of non-Iraqi terrorists.

Sometimes, these “defectors” would enter the cloistered world of U.S. intelligence with entrées from former U.S. government officials.

For instance, ex-CIA Director James Woolsey referred at least a couple of these Iraqi sources to the DIA. Woolsey, who was affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies and other neoconservative think tanks, had been one of the Reagan administration’s favorite Democrats in the 1980s because he supported a hawkish foreign policy. After Bill Clinton won the White House, Woolsey parlayed his close ties to the neocons into the job as CIA director.

In early 1993, Clinton’s foreign policy adviser Samuel “Sandy” Berger explained to one well-placed Democratic official that Woolsey was given the CIA job because the Clinton team felt it owed a favor to the neoconservative *New Republic*, which had lent Clinton some cachet with the insider crowd of Washington.

Amid that more relaxed post-Cold War mood, the Clinton team viewed the CIA directorship as a kind of a patronage plum that could be handed out as a favor to campaign supporters. But new international challenges soon emerged and Woolsey proved to be an ineffective leader of the intelligence community. After two years, he was replaced.

As the 1990s wore on, the spurned Woolsey grew closer to Washington’s fast-growing neoconservative movement, which was openly hostile to President Clinton for his perceived softness in asserting U.S. military power, especially against

Arab regimes in the Middle East.

On Jan. 26, 1998, the neocon Project for the New American Century sent a letter to Clinton urging the ouster of Saddam Hussein by force if necessary. Woolsey was one of the 18 signers. By early 2001, he also had grown close to the INC, having been hired as co-counsel to represent eight Iraqis, including INC members, who had been detained on immigration charges.

So, Woolsey was well-positioned to serve as a conduit for INC “defectors” trying to get their stories to U.S. officials and to the American public.

The ‘Sources’

DIA officials told the Senate Intelligence Committee that Woolsey introduced them to the first in a long line of INC-sponsored Iraqi “defectors” who told the DIA about Hussein’s WMD and his supposed relationship with Islamic terrorists. For his part, Woolsey said he didn’t recall making that referral.

The debriefings of “Source One” as he was called in the Senate Intelligence Committee report generated more than 250 intelligence reports. Two of the reports described alleged terrorist training sites in Iraq, where Afghan, Pakistani and Palestinian nationals were allegedly taught military skills at the Salman Pak base, 20 miles south of Baghdad.

“Many Iraqis believe that Saddam Hussein had made an agreement with Usama bin Ladin in order to support his terrorist movement against the U.S.,” Source One claimed, according to the Senate report.

After the 9/11 attacks, information from Source One and other INC-connected “defectors” began surfacing in U.S. press accounts, not only in the right-wing news media, but many mainstream publications.

In an Oct. 12, 2001, column entitled “What About Iraq?” *Washington Post* chief foreign correspondent Jim Hoagland cited “accumulating evidence of Iraq’s role in sponsoring the development on its soil of weapons and techniques for international terrorism,” including training at Salman Pak.

Hoagland’s sources included Iraqi army defector Sabah Khalifa Khodada and another unnamed Iraqi ex-intelligence officer in Turkey. Hoagland also criticized the CIA for not taking seriously a possible Iraqi link to 9/11.

Hoagland’s column was followed by a Page One article in *The New York Times*, which was headlined “Defectors Cite Iraqi Training for Terrorism.” It relied on Khodada, the second source in Turkey (who was later identified as Abu Zeinab al-Qurairy, a former senior officer in Iraq’s intelligence agency, the Mukhabarat),

and a lower-ranking member of Mukhabarat.

This story described 40 to 50 Islamic militants getting training at Salman Pak at any one time, including lessons on how to hijack an airplane without weapons. There were also claims about a German scientist working on biological weapons.

In a *Columbia Journalism Review* retrospective on press coverage of U.S. intelligence on Iraq, writer Douglas McCollam asked *Times* correspondent Chris Hedges about the *Times* article, which had been written in coordination with a PBS Frontline documentary called "Gunning for Saddam," with correspondent Lowell Bergman.

Explaining the difficulty of checking out defector accounts when they meshed with the interests of the U.S. government, Hedges said, "We tried to vet the defectors and we didn't get anything out of Washington that said, 'these guys are full of shit.'"

For his part, Bergman told *CJR's* McCollam, "The people involved appeared credible and we had no way of getting into Iraq ourselves."

The journalistic competition to break anti-Hussein scoops was building. Based in Paris, Hedges said he would get periodic calls from *Times* editors asking that he check out defector stories originating from Chalabi's operation.

"I thought he was unreliable and corrupt, but just because someone is a sleazebag doesn't mean he might not know something or that everything he says is wrong," Hedges said. Hedges described Chalabi as having an "endless stable" of ready sources who could fill in American reporters on any number of Iraq-related topics.

The Salman Pak story would be one of many products from the INC's propaganda mill that would prove influential in the run-up to the Iraq War but would be knocked down later by U.S. intelligence agencies.

According to the Senate Intelligence Committee's *post-mortem*, the DIA stated in June 2006 that it found "no credible reports that non-Iraqis were trained to conduct or support transnational terrorist operations at Salman Pak after 1991."

Explaining the origins for the bogus tales, the DIA concluded that Operation Desert Storm had brought attention to the training base at Salman Pak, so "fabricators and unestablished sources who reported hearsay or third-hand information created a large volume of human intelligence reporting. This type of reporting surged after September 2001."

Going with the Flow

However, in the prelude to the Iraq War, U.S. intelligence agencies found it hard to resist the INC's "defectors" when that would have meant challenging the White House and going against Washington's conventional wisdom. Rather than take those career chances, many intelligence analysts found it easier to go with the flow.

Referring to the INC's Source One, a U.S. intelligence memorandum in July 2002 hailed the information as "highly credible and includes reports on a wide range of subjects including conventional weapons facilities, denial and deception; communications security; suspected terrorist training locations; illicit trade and smuggling; Saddam's palaces; the Iraqi prison system; and Iraqi petrochemical plants."

Only analysts in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research were skeptical because they felt Source One was making unfounded assumptions, especially about possible nuclear research sites.

After the invasion of Iraq, U.S. intelligence finally began to recognize the holes in Source One's stories and spotted examples of analysts extrapolating faulty conclusions from his limited first-hand knowledge.

"In early February 2004, in order to resolve credibility issues with Source One, Intelligence Community elements brought Source One to Iraq," the Senate Intelligence Committee report said. "When taken to the location Source One had described as the suspect [nuclear] facility, he was unable to identify it.

"According to one intelligence assessment, the 'subject appeared stunned upon hearing that he was standing on the spot that he reported as the location of the facility, insisted that he had never been to that spot, and wanted to check a map'

"Intelligence Community officers confirmed that they were standing on the location he was identifying. During questioning, Source One acknowledged contact with the INC's Washington Director [redacted], but denied that the Washington Director directed Source One to provide any false information."

The U.S. intelligence community had mixed reactions to other Iraqi "walk-ins" arranged by the INC. Some were caught in outright deceptions, such as "Source Two" who had talked about Iraq supposedly building mobile biological weapons labs.

After catching Source Two in contradictions, the CIA issued a "fabrication notice" in May 2002, deeming him "a fabricator/provocateur" and asserting that he had "been coached by the Iraqi National Congress prior to his meeting with western intelligence services."

However, the DIA never repudiated the specific reports that had been based on Source Two's debriefings. So, Source Two continued to be cited in five CIA intelligence assessments and the pivotal National Intelligence Estimate in October 2002, "as corroborating other source reporting about a mobile biological weapons program," the Senate Intelligence Committee report said.

Source Two was one of four human sources referred to by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his United Nations speech on Feb. 5, 2003. When asked how a "fabricator" could have been used for such an important speech, a CIA analyst who worked on Powell's speech said, "we lost the thread of concern as time progressed I don't think we remembered."

A CIA supervisor added, "Clearly we had it at one point, we understood, we had concerns about the source, but over time it started getting used again and there really was a loss of corporate awareness that we had a problem with the source."

Flooding Defectors

Part of the challenge facing U.S. intelligence agencies was the sheer volume of "defectors" shepherded into debriefing rooms by the INC and the appeal of their anti-Hussein information to U.S. policymakers.

"Source Five," for instance, claimed that Osama bin Laden had traveled to Baghdad for direct meetings with Saddam Hussein. "Source Six" claimed that the Iraqi population was "excited" about the prospects of a U.S. invasion to topple Hussein. Plus, the source said Iraqis recognized the need for post-invasion U.S. control.

By early February 2003, as the final invasion plans were underway, U.S. intelligence agencies had progressed up to "Source Eighteen," who came to epitomize what some analysts still suspected that the INC was coaching the sources.

As the CIA tried to set up a debriefing of Source Eighteen, another Iraqi exile passed on word to the agency that an INC representative had told Source Eighteen to "deliver the act of a lifetime." CIA analysts weren't sure what to make of that piece of news since Iraqi exiles frequently badmouthed each other but the value of the warning soon became clear.

U.S. intelligence officers debriefed Source Eighteen the next day and discovered that "Source Eighteen was supposed to have a nuclear engineering background, but was unable to discuss advanced mathematics or physics and described types of 'nuclear' reactors that do not exist," according to the Senate Intelligence Committee report.

"Source Eighteen used the bathroom frequently, particularly when he appeared to be flustered by a line of questioning, suddenly remembering a new piece of information upon his return. During one such incident, Source Eighteen appeared to be reviewing notes," the report said.

Not surprisingly, the CIA and DIA case officers concluded that Source Eighteen was a fabricator. But the sludge of INC-connected misinformation and disinformation continued to ooze through the U.S. intelligence community and to foul the American intelligence product in part because there was little pressure from above demanding strict quality controls.

Curve Ball

Other Iraqi exile sources not directly connected to the INC also supplied dubious information, including a source for a foreign intelligence agency who earned the code name "Curve Ball." He contributed important details about Iraq's alleged mobile facilities for producing agents for biological warfare.

Tyler Drumheller, former chief of the CIA's European Division, said his office had issued repeated warnings about Curve Ball's accounts. "Everyone in the chain of command knew exactly what was happening," Drumheller said. [Los Angeles Times, April 2, 2005]

Despite those objections and the lack of direct U.S. contact with Curve Ball, he earned a rating as "credible" or "very credible," and his information became a core element of the Bush administration's case for invading Iraq.

Drawings of Curve Ball's imaginary bio-weapons labs were a central feature of Secretary of State Powell's presentation to the U.N.

Even after the invasion, U.S. officials continued to promote these claims, portraying the discovery of a couple of trailers used for inflating artillery balloons as "the strongest evidence to date that Iraq was hiding a biological warfare program." [CIA-DIA report, "Iraqi Mobile Biological Warfare Agent Production Plants," May 16, 2003]

Finally, on May 26, 2004, a CIA assessment of Curve Ball said "investigations since the war in Iraq and debriefings of the key source indicate he lied about his access to a mobile BW production product."

The U.S. intelligence community also learned that Curve Ball "had a close relative who had worked for the INC since 1992," but the CIA could never resolve the question of whether the INC was involved in coaching Curve Ball.

One CIA analyst said she doubted a direct INC role because the INC pattern was

to “shop their good sources around town, but they weren’t known for sneaking people out of countries into some asylum system.”

Delayed Report

In September 2006, four years after the Bush administration began fanning the flames for war against Iraq, a majority of Senate Intelligence Committee members overrode the objections of the panel’s senior Republicans and issued a report on the INC’s contribution to the U.S. intelligence failures.

The report concluded that the INC fed false information to the intelligence community to convince Washington that Iraq was flouting prohibitions on WMD production. The panel also found that the falsehoods had been “widely distributed in intelligence products prior to the war” and did influence some American perceptions of the WMD threat in Iraq.

But INC disinformation was not solely to blame for the bogus intelligence that permeated the pre-war debate. In Washington, there had been a breakdown of the normal checks and balances that American democracy has traditionally relied on for challenging and eliminating the corrosive effects of false data.

By 2002, that self-correcting mechanism a skeptical press, congressional oversight, and tough-minded analysts had collapsed. With very few exceptions, prominent journalists refused to put their careers at risk; intelligence professionals played along with the powers that be; Democratic leaders succumbed to the political pressure to toe the President’s line; and Republicans marched in lockstep with Bush on his way to war.

Because of this systematic failure, the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded four years later that nearly every key assessment of the U.S. intelligence community as expressed in the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate about Iraq’s WMD was wrong:

“Postwar findings do not support the [NIE] judgment that Iraq was reconstituting its nuclear weapons program; do not support the [NIE] assessment that Iraq’s acquisition of high-strength aluminum tubes was intended for an Iraqi nuclear program; do not support the [NIE] assessment that Iraq was ‘vigorously trying to procure uranium ore and yellowcake’ from Africa; do not support the [NIE] assessment that ‘Iraq has biological weapons’ and that ‘all key aspects of Iraq’s offensive biological weapons program are larger and more advanced than before the Gulf war’; do not support the [NIE] assessment that Iraq possessed, or ever developed, mobile facilities for producing biological warfare agents; do not support the [NIE] assessments that Iraq ‘has chemical weapons’ or ‘is expanding its chemical industry to support chemical weapons production’; do not

support the [NIE] assessments that Iraq had a developmental program for an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle 'probably intended to deliver biological agents' or that an effort to procure U.S. mapping software 'strongly suggests that Iraq is investigating the use of these UAVs for missions targeting the United States.'"

Now, more than a half decade after the Senate report, one might hope that this cautionary tale of how a dangerous "group think" can lead a nation to war would be remembered by editors, politicians and the public as a similar crescendo of propaganda builds about Iran.

But the opposite seems to be the case. An historical amnesia has taken hold, enabling the same political and career pressures to return. Mainstream journalists fall over themselves to compose scoops about Iran's WMD just as they did regarding Iraq's WMD. Politicians compete to out-macho the other when it comes to threatening Iran.

Skepticism toward politicized organizations like the IAEA is nearly non-existent. The American people are told to be afraid, very afraid. The only significant difference may be that President Barack Obama is less eager for war with Iran than President George W. Bush was regarding war with Iraq.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America's Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)).

Dubious Graph Feeds Iran Nuke Frenzy

Propaganda aimed at convincing Americans that Iran is pursuing a nuclear bomb continues with more dubious evidence leaked to an ever-gullible U.S. press corps. An AP story highlighted a supposed Iranian computer model of a nuclear explosion but the graph may be forged, says Gareth Porter at Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter

The suspect graph of a nuclear explosion reportedly provided to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as evidence of Iranian computer modeling of nuclear weapons yields appears to have been adapted from a very similar graph in a scholarly journal article published in January 2009 and available on the Internet.

The graph, published in a Nov. 27 Associated Press story but immediately found to have a mathematical error of four orders of magnitude, closely resembles a graph accompanying a scholarly article modeling a nuclear explosion. It provides a plausible explanation for the origins of the graph leaked to AP, according to two nuclear physicists following the issue closely.

The graph in the scholarly journal article was well known to the IAEA at the time of its publication, according to a knowledgeable source.

That means that the IAEA should have been able to make the connection between the set of graphs alleged to have been used by Iran to calculate yields from nuclear explosions that the agency obtained in 2011 and the very similar graph available on the internet.

The IAEA did not identify the member countries that provided the intelligence about the alleged Iran studies. However, Israel provided most of the intelligence cited by the IAEA in its 2011 report, and Israeli intelligence has been the source of a number of leaks to the AP reporter in Vienna, George Jahn.

The graph accompanying an article in the January 2009 issue of the journal Nuclear Engineering and Design by retired Swiss nuclear engineer Walter Seifritz displayed a curve representing power in a nuclear explosion over fractions of a second that is very close to the one shown in the graph published by AP and attributed by the officials leaking it to an Iranian scientist.

Both graphs depict a nuclear explosion as an asymmetrical bell curve in which the right side of the curve is more elongated than the left side. Although both graphs are too crudely drawn to allow precise measurement, it appears that the difference between the two sides of the curve on the two graphs is very close to the same in both graphs.

The AP graph appears to show a total energy production of 50 kilotons taking place over about 0.3 microseconds, whereas the Seifritz graph shows a total of roughly 18 kilotons produced over about 0.1 microseconds.

The resemblance is so dramatic that two nuclear specialists who compared the graphs at the request of IPS consider it very plausible that the graph leaked to AP as part of an Iranian secret nuclear weapons research program may well have been derived from the one in the journal article.

Scott Kemp, an assistant professor of nuclear science and engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), told IPS he suspects the graph leaked to AP was "adapted from the open literature". He said he believes the authors of that graph "were told they ought to look into the literature and found that paper, copied (the graph) and made their own plot from it."

Yousaf Butt, a nuclear scientist at the Monterey Institute, who had spotted the enormous error in the graph published by AP, along with his colleague Ferenc Dalnoki-Veress, said in an interview with IPS that a relationship between the two graphs is quite plausible, particularly given the fact they both have similar asymmetries in the power curve.

“Someone may just have taken the Seifritz graph and crudely adapted it to a 50-kilotonne yield instead of the 18 kilotons in the paper,” Butt said.

He added that “it’s not even necessary that an actual computer model was even run in the production of the AP graph.”

Apparently anticipating that the Seifritz graph would soon be discovered, the source of the graph given to AP is quoted in a Dec. 1 story as acknowledging that “similar graphs can be found in textbooks, the internet and other public sources.”

Butt said that he doesn’t know whether the AP graph is genuine or not, but that it could well be a forgery.

“If one wanted to plant a forgery,” he wrote, “it would make sense to manufacture something that looked like the output from the many unclassified ‘toy-models’ available on-line or in academic journals, rather than leak something from an actual high-fidelity classified study.”

The Seifritz graph came to the attention of the IAEA secretariat soon after it was published and was referred to the staff specialist on nuclear weapons research, according to a source familiar with the IAEA’s handling of such issues.

The source, who refused to be identified, told IPS the reaction of the official was that the graph represented fairly crude work on basic theory and was therefore not of concern to the agency.

The agency was given the alleged Iranian graph in 2011, and a “senior diplomat” from a different country from the source of the graph said IAEA investigators realized the diagram was flawed shortly after they received it, according to the Dec. 1 AP story.

The IAEA’s familiarity with the Seifritz graph, two years before it was given graphs that bore a close resemblance to it and which the agency knew contained a huge mathematical error, raise new questions about how the IAEA could have regarded the Israeli intelligence as credible evidence of Iranian work on nuclear weapons.

Yukiya Amano, the director-general of the IAEA, refused to confirm or deny in an appearance at the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington Dec. 6 that the graph published by AP was part of the evidence of Iranian "activities" related to nuclear weapons cited by the agency in its November 2011 report. .

Amano responded to a question on the graph, "I can't discuss this specific information."

In its November 2011 report, the IAEA said it had "information" from two member states that Iran had conducted "modeling studies" aimed at determining the "nuclear explosive yield" associated with components of nuclear weapon. It said the "information" had identified "models said to have been used in those studies and the results of these calculations, which the Agency has seen".

The "senior diplomat" quoted by AP said the IAEA also had a spreadsheet containing the data needed to produce the same yield as shown on the graph 50 kilotons suggesting that the spreadsheet is closely related to the graph.

Butt observed, however, that the existence of the spreadsheet with data showing the yield related to a 50-kiloton explosion does not make the graph any more credible, because the spreadsheet could have been created by simply plugging the data used to produce the graph.

Kemp of MIT agreed with Butt's assessment. "If it's simply data points plotted in the graph, it means nothing," he told IPS.

After Butt and Dalnoki-Veress identified the fundamental error in the graph AP had published as evidence of Iranian work on a 50-kiloton bomb, the Israeli source of the graph and an unidentified "senior diplomat" argued that the error must have been intentionally made by the Iranian scientist who they alleged had produced the graph.

A "senior diplomat" told AP the IAEA believed the scientist had changed the units of energy used by orders of magnitude, because "Nobody would have understood the original."

That explanation was embraced by David Albright, who has served as unofficial IAEA spokesman in Washington on several occasions. But neither Albright nor the unidentified officials quoted by Jahn offered any explanation as to why an accurate graph would have been more difficult for Iranian officials to understand than one with such a huge mathematical error.

Further undermining the credibility of the explanation, Jahn's sources suggested that the Iranian scientist whom they suspected of having devised the graph was Dr. Majid Shahriari, the nuclear scientist assassinated by the Israeli

intelligence agency Mossad in 2010.

No evidence has been produced to indicate that Shahriari, who had a long record of publications relating to nuclear power plants and basic nuclear physics, had anything to do with nuclear weapons research.

Gareth Porter, an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy, received the UK-based Gellhorn Prize for journalism for 2011 for articles on the U.S. war in Afghanistan. [This story originally appeared at Inter Press Service.]

Adding Hurdles for Iran to Clear

The current head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, who was essentially installed by Western powers, is adding new hurdles for Iran to clear before an agreement can be reached on its nuclear program, a standoff addressed by Gareth Porter for Inter Press Service.

By Gareth Porter (Updated and corrected on May 15, 2012)

In meetings with Iranian officials in Vienna this week, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) apparently intends to hold up agreement on a plan for Iran's full cooperation in clarifying allegations of covert nuclear weapons work by insisting that it must first let the nuclear agency visit Parchin military base.

That demand, coupled with the IAEA's insistence in the talks on being able to prolong the inquiry on Iran's alleged nuclear weapons work indefinitely, make the failure of the current talks very likely. Iran has made it clear that it wants assurances that the IAEA inquiry on the allegations will allow it to achieve closure on an agreed timetable by responding fully to IAEA questions.

That intention was signaled by IAEA Director General Yukia Amano's handling of the previous round of negotiations in February in an interview with Michael Adler in The Daily Beast on March 11. Amano told Adler that what he called the "standoff" over access to Parchin "has become like a symbol" and vowed to "pursue this objective until there's a concrete result."

But the "standoff" was not over access to Parchin itself but whether the IAEA would insist that the cooperation plan be held hostage to such a visit. Adler cited an "informed source" as saying that the IAEA rejects any linkage between a

visit to Parchin and the rest of the plan for cooperation being negotiated and insists that a visit to Parchin must come first before any agreement.

Iran had implicitly been using the IAEA's desire for the Parchin visit as a bargaining chip in negotiations over the terms of their cooperation and especially the question of whether the process is to have an agreed endpoint. Amano and Western officials have justified the insistence on immediate access to the Parchin site to investigate an alleged explosive containment vessel for testing related to a nuclear weapon by suggesting that satellite photographs show Iran may be trying to "clean up" the site.

David Albright, who has frequently passed on information and arguments originating with the IAEA on the website of the Institute for Science and International Security, was quoted by the Associated Press on Sunday as arguing that a clean-up of the Parchin site "could involve grinding down the surfaces inside the building, collecting the dust and then washing the area thoroughly." Albright further suggested that Iran could remove "any dirt around the building thought to contain contaminants".

But former senior IAEA nuclear inspector Robert Kelley told IPS that IAEA inspectors "will find uranium particles at a site like this if they ever were there." Kelley, who worked in U.S. nuclear weapons programs at Livermore and Los Alamos national laboratories and was director of the Remote Sensing Laboratory in Las Vegas, recalled that Syria had been sent to the U.N. Security Council "on the basis of tiny microscopic particles found at a site that had been bulldozed a year after the event."

Access to Parchin has not been the issue in Iran's negotiations with the IAEA. Iran's permanent representative to the IAEA, Ambassador Ali Asghar Soltanieh, has said that Iran is willing to grant access to Parchin as part of an agreed plan for Iranian cooperation with the IAEA.

The unfinished text of the agreement as of the end of February round of talks reveals that the real conflict is over whether the IAEA can prolong the process of questioning Iran about allegations of covert nuclear weapons work indefinitely.

On March 8, in response to a presentation by Soltanieh to the IAEA Board of Governors detailing the negotiations, Amano confirmed, in effect, that the agency was insisting on being able to extend the process by coming up with more questions, regardless of Iran's responses to the IAEA's questions on the agreed list of topics. He complained that Iran had sought to force the agency to "present a definitive list of questions" and to deny the agency "the right to revisit issues."

Amano's demands for immediate access to Parchin and for a process without any clear endpoint appear to be aimed at allowing the United States and its allies to continue accusing Iran of refusing cooperation with the IAEA during negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group scheduled to resume in Baghdad May 23.

Amano was elected to replace the more independent Mohamed ElBaradei in 2009 with U.S. assistance and pledged to align the agency with U.S. policy on Iran as well as other issues, as revealed by WikiLeaks cables dated July and October 2009. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Slanting the Case on Iran's Nukes.](#)"]

The [draft negotiating text](#) as of Feb. 21, which has been posted on the website of the Arms Control Association, shows Iran seeking a final resolution of the issues within a matter of weeks but the IAEA insisting on an open-ended process with no promise of such an early resolution.

The unfinished negotiating draft explains why Iran is holding on to Parchin access as a bargaining chip to get an agreement that will give Iran some tangible political benefit in return for information responding to a series of IAEA allegations. The still unfinished draft represents the original draft from the IAEA, as modified by Iran during the last round of talks, according to Soltanieh in an interview with IPS on March 15.

The negotiating draft shows that Iran and the IAEA had proposed and Iran agreed that the very first issues on which Iran would respond were "Parchin" and the "foreign expert." The issue of whether or not the plan would provide for a clear-cut closure if Iran provided satisfactory answers comes up repeatedly in the draft. The IAEA draft refers to "a number of actions that are to be undertaken before the June 2012 meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, if possible."

But the draft appears to anticipate a process without any specific terminal point. "Follow up actions that are required of Iran," it says, "to facilitate the Agency's conclusions regarding the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme will be identified as this process continues."

Iran amended that paragraph so that the process would be completed by the June 2012 IAEA board meeting. The entire sentence providing for identification of further actions required of Iran during the process is struck out in the text. Iran agreed in the draft agreement to "facilitate a conclusive technical assessment of all issues of concern to the Agency." But Iran inserted the sentence, "There exist no issues other than those reflected in the said annex."

A crucial element of the plan presented by the IAEA is a provision under which

the agency “may adjust the order in which issues and topics are discussed, and return to those that have been discussed earlier, given that the issues and topics are interrelated.” In other words, there would be no promise of closure on an issue, regardless of what information Iran provides on the topic or topics.

Iran deleted the language allowing the return to issues that had been discussed earlier. The IAEA draft envisions a process that would begin with an Iranian “initial declaration,” after which the IAEA would “provide initial questions and a detailed explain of its concerns.” But the draft shows an Iranian strikethrough on the word “initial,” rejecting the IAEA’s right to come up with more questions even after the initial questions were answered.

The IAEA draft provided that, after Iran had responded to questions and requests, and the IAEA had analyzed the responses, “the Agency will discuss with Iran any further actions to be taken.” But Iran rewrote the sentence to read “(T)he agency will discuss and agree with Iran on actions to be taken on each topic. After implementation of action on each topic, it will be considered concluded and then the work on the next topic will start.”

Gareth Porter is an investigative historian and journalist specializing in U.S. national security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*, was published in 2006. [This article originally appeared at Inter Press Service. It updates a previous version of the story with a correction for the date of Amano’s interview with the Daily Beast.]

Is IAEA Greasing Skids to Iran War?

The U.S. press corps has embraced the integrity of the International Atomic Energy Agency as central to the case for bombing Iran. But WikiLeaks [documents revealed](#) how the IAEA’s new leader is a pawn of the West, and Gareth Porter explains at Inter Press Service how the IAEA has escalated the confrontation with Iran.

By Gareth Porter

The first detailed account of negotiations between the International Atomic Energy Agency and Iran last month belies earlier statements by unnamed Western officials portraying Iran as refusing to cooperate with the IAEA in allaying concerns about alleged nuclear weaponization work.

The detailed account given by Iran's permanent representative to the IAEA, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, shows that the talks in February came close to a final agreement, but were hung up primarily over the IAEA insistence on being able to reopen issues even after Iran had answered questions about them to the organization's satisfaction.

It also indicates that the IAEA demand to visit Parchin military base during that trip to Tehran reversed a previous agreement that the visit would come later in the process, and that IAEA Director General Yukia Amano ordered his negotiators to break off the talks and return to Vienna rather than accept Iran's invitation to stay for a third day. [For more on Amano's bias, see Consortiumnews.com's "[Slanting the Case on Iran's Nukes.](#)"]

Soltanieh took the unprecedented step of revealing the details of the incomplete negotiations with the IAEA in an interview with IPS in Vienna last week and in a presentation to a closed session of the IAEA's Board of Governors March 8, which the Iranian mission has now made public.

The Iranian envoy went public with his account of the talks after a series of anonymous statements to the press by the IAEA Secretariat and member states had portrayed Iran as being uncooperative on Parchin as well as in the negotiations on an agreement on cooperation with the agency.

Those statements now appear to have been aimed at building a case for a resolution by the Board condemning Iran's intransigence in order to increase diplomatic pressure on Iran in advance of talks between the P5+1 and Iran.

Soltanieh's account suggests that Amano may have switched signals to the IAEA delegation after consultations with the United States and other powerful member states which wanted to be able to cite the Parchin access issue to condemn Iran for its alleged failure to cooperate with the IAEA.

Parchin had been cited in the November 2011 IAEA report as the location of an alleged explosive containment cylinder, said by one or more IAEA member states to have been used for hydrodynamic testing of nuclear weapons designs.

The detailed Iranian account shows that the IAEA delegation requested a visit to Parchin in the first round of the negotiations in Tehran Jan. 29-31 and that it asked again at the beginning of the three "intercessional" meetings in Vienna for such a visit to take place at a second negotiating round in Tehran Feb. 20-21.

Soltanieh recalled, however, that during three "intercessional" meetings in February with IAEA Deputy Director General for Safeguards Herman Nackaerts, and Assistant Director General for Political Affairs Rafael Grossi, the two sides

had reached agreement that the IAEA request for access to Parchin would be postponed until after the Board of Governors meeting in March.

But when the IAEA delegation arrived Feb. 20, it renewed the demand to visit Parchin, according to Soltanieh's account. "At the beginning of the meeting the first day, they said the director general had instructed them to give a message to us that they wanted to go to Parchin today or tomorrow, despite what we had clearly agreed two weeks earlier," Soltanieh told IPS.

Soltanieh told the Board of Governors that the negotiating text on which the two sides were working at the Feb. 20-21 meeting provided specifically for a visit to Parchin as well as other sites in conjunction with Iran's actions to clear up the issue of "hydrodynamic experiments" the allegation by an unnamed member government published in the November 2011 IAEA report.

In response to the renewed request for a visit to Parchin, Soltanieh offered to let the delegation visit the Marivan site, where the same November report said the agency had "credible" evidence Iranian engineers worked on high-explosives testing for a nuclear device.

"We offered Marivan because it was the next priority," Soltanieh told IPS, referring to the list of priority issues on which Iran was expected to take actions to be specified by the IAEA under the provision of the negotiating text. But the IAEA delegation rejected the offer, claiming that it had been given too little time.

Soltanieh's account reveals that the IAEA also turned down a request to stay one additional day to complete the negotiations of the new action plan. "At lunch hour the second day, we wanted them to stay another day," he told IPS, and the delegation told them it might be possible. But after consulting with Amano, the IAEA delegation said it could not stay.

Amano's change of signals on Parchin and refusal to stay for a third day of negotiations were followed by condemnation of Iran as uncooperative by a "senior Western official" shortly before the IAEA Board of Governors meeting. The official was quoted by Reuters on March 2 as saying, "We think there needs to be a resolution that makes clear that Iran needs to do more, a lot more, to comply with the agency's requests." The official called Iran's stance during the talks a "gigantic slap in the face of the IAEA."

In the end, no resolution was passed by the Board. Instead the P5+1 the U.S., Britain, France, Russia and China plus Germany – issued a joint statement urging Iran to allow access to Parchin but not blaming Iran for the failure to reach agreement. The negotiating text as it stood at the end of the February round of

talks, which Soltanieh showed IPS, had relatively few handwritten deletions and additions.

A key provision in the draft text, which IPS was allowed to quote, says, "Iran agrees to cooperate with the Agency to facilitate a conclusive technical assessment of all issues of concern to the Agency. This cooperation will include inspections by the Agency, additional meetings, including technical meetings and visits, and access to relevant information, documentation and sites, material and personnel."

The primary issue standing in the way of final agreement, according to Soltanieh, was whether the IAEA could reopen issues once they had been resolved. The text shown to IPS includes a provision that IAEA "may adjust the order" in which issues were to be resolved and "return" to issues even after they had been resolved.

The Iranians accepted the right of the IAEA to adjust the order but did not agree that it could reopen issues once they were completed satisfactorily, Soltanieh recalled, because Iran feared that giving the IAEA that power would lead to "an endless process."

The other major issue, according to Soltanieh, was Iran's demand that the IAEA "deliver" all the intelligence documents alleging that it had carried out covert weaponization activities to Iran before asking it for definitive answers to the allegation. The IAEA delegation said they couldn't produce all the documents at once, he told IPS.

Iran then agreed that the agency could provide only those documents relevant to each issue when it comes up, the Iranian diplomat recalled. It is not clear, however, whether the IAEA has agreed to that compromise.

The United States has refused in the past to agree to turn over the "alleged studies" documents to Iran a policy that Amano's predecessor, Mohamed ElBaradei had argued made it impossible to demand that Iran be held accountable for explaining those documents.

After Soltanieh's presentation to the Board of Governors, Amano told reporters that some of Soltanieh's statements had been inaccurate but appeared to confirm the main points of his presentation. "In fact, the February talks initially took place in a constructive spirit," he said. "Differences between Iran and the Agency appeared to have narrowed."

On the second day, Amano said, Iran had "sought to re-impose restrictions on our work," which he said "included obliging the Agency to present a definitive list of questions and denying us the right to revisit issues, or to deal with certain

issues in parallel, to name just a few.”

Amano’s spokesperson Gill Tudor declined to comment on the accuracy of Soltanieh’s account for this story, saying “(W)e would prefer to let the director general’s words speak for themselves.”

In response to a request for comment on this story, the U.S. State Department deferred to Amano’s account on the talks but said, “ (D)espite the IAEA’s best efforts, Iran was unwilling to reach such an agreement” and had “failed an initial test of its good faith and willingness to cooperate by refusing an IAEA request to visit Parchin.”

Gareth Porter is an investigative historian and journalist specialising in U.S. national security policy. The paperback edition of his latest book, *Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam*, was published in 2006. [This story appeared previously at Inter Press Service.]
