

IAEA to Discuss Advances in Iran's Nuclear Program

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors will hold a crucial meeting on Iran's clandestine nuclear activities this month to address concerns that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program. The meeting comes after the agency released an August 26 report saying that "there remain a number of important outstanding issues" about Tehran's nuclear program that require "urgent resolution."

That report was the latest in a series of warnings by the IAEA about Tehran's nuclear activities. Prompted by the United States and other countries, a June IAEA Board of Governors statement called on Iran to resolve concerns created by the government's failure to report nuclear activities "as required by its safeguards obligations." The statement specifically called on Tehran to sign an additional protocol to its IAEA Safeguards Agreement and allow the agency to conduct environmental sampling at the Kala Electric Company—a site where Iran might have carried out illegal uranium-enrichment activities. Safeguards agreements are required under the [nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#), which Iran ratified in 1970, to ensure that member states do not divert civilian nuclear programs to military purposes.

The Board's statement came just after the IAEA issued a report June 6 about Iran's undeclared nuclear activities. Agency experts have visited Iran several times during the past two months to verify information Iran subsequently provided about these activities.

The United States has long expressed concern that Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapons program—a charge Iran has repeatedly denied. A State Department official interviewed August 28 said that the most recent report provides "further incriminating evidence" of Iran's violations of its safeguards agreement, adding that the IAEA needs to continue to pursue these matters.

Iran Considers Additional Protocol

IAEA Director-General Mohamed ElBaradei visited Iran July 9 to urge Tehran to conclude an additional protocol, and a group of IAEA experts followed up on his visit on August 5-6 for further discussions about the matter. Since 1997, the IAEA has encouraged NPT member states to sign an additional protocol, which allows the IAEA to conduct more rigorous inspections, including visits to facilities that countries have not declared to the IAEA, in order to check for clandestine nuclear programs.

Although Iran has not yet agreed to sign it, Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh said that "Iran views the additional...protocol positively" and will continue discussions with the IAEA, according to an August 13 Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) report. The discussions are for clarifying details about the protocol, he said. Iran told the agency that Iran is "prepared to begin negotiation with the [IAEA] on the Additional Protocol," according to the August 26 report.

Iran might have softened its stance on the issue of an additional protocol. Although a June IRNA report stated that Iran was conditioning its signing of the protocol on Western countries lifting restrictions on supplying nuclear technology to Iran, Aghazadeh said August 13 that "conditions are not important." He implied, however, that Iran still wants access to nuclear technology, suggesting

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that the policy has not changed substantially. Article IV of the NPT says that states-parties “have the right to participate in, the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.” The United States has laws against exporting dual-use goods and technology to Iran, and Washington has urged Russia to end its assistance for a nuclear program in Iran that Tehran and Moscow claim is for civilian purposes. ([See ACT, January/February 2003.](#))

Secretary of State Colin Powell said August 1 that Iran signing the Additional Protocol wouldn't be sufficient to satisfy Washington's concerns about that country's nuclear programs.

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