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Diplomacy and Sanctions, Yes. Left Unspoken on Iran? Sabotage.

Sanger, David E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]20 Jan 2016: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

When his vice president, Dick Cheney, advocated bombing a secret nuclear reactor in Syria in 2007, partly to make a point to Iran, Mr. Bush rejected the proposal out of hand, a tale Mr. Cheney tells with some bitterness in his memoir.

FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON -- President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry have a simple explanation for their surprising success in getting Iran to dismantle much of its nuclear infrastructure, ship out 98 percent of its nuclear fuel and release five American prisoners: Patient diplomacy, backed by escalating economic sanctions, accomplished more than military action ever could have.

When the final history of this remarkable encounter between Washington and Tehran is written, the story is likely to be far more complex.

Yes, diplomacy and economic pressure were critical, but even several of Mr. Obama's top aides doubted as recently as a year ago that, in the end, Iran's mullahs and generals would actually dismantle a program in which they had invested both national pride and billions of dollars. Those aides had good reason for skepticism: While all comparisons between North Korea and Iran are fraught, if economic pressure alone could do the trick, Pyongyang would have given up its nuclear program two decades ago.

But Mr. Obama's strategy had a major coercive element as well. This included covert actions that repeatedly, if briefly, set back the nuclear program and convinced Iranian elites that its secrecy had been compromised. Then there was the fear, in Washington and Iran, that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel would launch a pre-emptive attack.

Mr. Obama has almost never talked about that side of the campaign, the short-of-war coercion that was part of what his aides once called the "light footprint strategy" of avoiding full-scale military action. But he alluded to its success obliquely on Sunday when he expressed pride in the fact that "we've achieved this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to another war in the Middle East."

By some accounts, it was a close call.

Michael D. Morell, a former C.I.A. deputy director, declines to talk about the actions taken against Iran but says that as Iran's program accelerated in Mr. Obama's first term, conflict loomed. "Before the negotiations for the

nuclear deal began," he said, "we were closer to war with the Islamic Republic than at any time since 1979."

The chances of war breaking out over the Iranians' nuclear program were higher in the Obama administration than they were during the George W. Bush administration that preceded it, if the public and private accounts of dozens of officials who served in one or the other – and a few in both – are to be believed.

Mr. Bush, wrapped up in two wars already and his credibility on going after weapons of mass destruction so destroyed after the 2003 Iraq invasion, never seriously contemplated military action against Iran. When his vice president, Dick Cheney, advocated bombing a secret nuclear reactor in Syria in 2007, partly to make a point to Iran, Mr. Bush rejected the proposal out of hand, a tale Mr. Cheney tells with some bitterness in his memoir.

During Mr. Bush's last year in office, Israel sought – and was denied, again over Mr. Cheney's objections – the bunker-busting bombs and other equipment it needed to carry out an effective strike on Iran. It took Israel years to develop its own lesser ability, and during Mr. Obama's tenure, according to the recent memoirs of a former Israeli defense minister, Ehud Barak, Mr. Netanyahu nearly pulled the trigger three times, coming closest in 2012. "We planned to do it," Mr. Barak said.

Mr. Obama had little doubt that if Israel started a conflict, the United States would be unable to stay out. That was the conclusion of a series of classified war-gaming exercises conducted at the National War College, at the Pentagon and inside American intelligence agencies.

In public, Mr. Obama credits the broad sanctions regime – which Mr. Netanyahu at first warned would never work – for convincing Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other hard-liners that they had to pursue another path. Certainly it played a major role in Iran's calculus, as oil shipments dropped by more than half and Iranian tankers bobbed at sea for more than a year, unable to deliver their goods.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister, has repeatedly argued that the "unjust sanctions" were counterproductive, noting that Iran's number of centrifuges and its fuel stockpile expanded as the economic noose tightened. TBut eventually, the price became too high.

What Mr. Obama does not say – because he cannot without describing classified programs – is that many of his own aides believe that an American covert sabotage program that began in the Clinton administration and steadily escalated over the next 15 years also played a critical role in persuading the Iranians to cash in the program. Court records that were made public in the prosecution of the Tinner family in Switzerland, a supplier of nuclear equipment to Libya, Iran and other countries as part of the Pakistani scientist A. Q. Khan's black market in atomic technology, made it clear that the C.I.A. had recruited insiders to provide the Iranians with faulty goods. In 2006, power supplies for the country's centrifuges blew up; it turned out they had been diverted, and tinkered with, by the United States before they were delivered.

The assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists, widely assumed to be the work of Israel's Mossad, grew so intense at one point that Hillary Clinton, then the secretary of state, publicly denounced the killings, being careful not to name Israel.

Mr. Bush authorized, and Mr. Obama accelerated, perhaps the best-known piece of covert action: the broad cyberattacks against the Natanz nuclear enrichment site in Iran, using what became known as the Stuxnet computer worm. Despite its sophistication – and the roughly 1,000 centrifuges destroyed – it probably slowed the program for only a year or so.

But the operation, code-named Olympic Games, made it clear to the Iranian elite that the United States and Israel were deeply inside their program, and clearly had turned some scientists and other workers who helped get the destructive code into the nuclear facilities.

It may be years before anyone knows for sure how much of a role these tactics played in Iran's ultimate decision. It might be that Iran would have given up the program anyway, given enough time. But in commentary published

Tuesday, Graham Allison of Harvard, who wrote the definitive history of the Cuban missile crisis, engaged in some what-might-have-happened speculation if Mr. Obama's diplomatic, economic and coercive effort had not worked. If Mr. Netanyahu had succeeded in killing the deal, or Republicans in Congress had blocked it, the sanctions "would have collapsed," he said. As Iran sped closer to a bomb, the Israelis would have renewed their threat to attack, and Republican candidates for president would blame Mr. Obama "for having failed to prevent Iran's acquiring a bomb."

The world, Mr. Allison concluded, "could well have been on the brink of a third major war in the Middle East."

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LINKS

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Document 2 of 19

Tehran Abuzz As Book Says Israel Killed 5 Scientists

Afkhami, Artin . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]12 July 2012: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

A Web site whose Persian name translates to Soft War, which is dedicated to documenting all forms of "psychological operations and soft war" against Iran, ridicules the book's assertions as "the biggest joke of the century," specifically the claim that Mossad operatives are skilled enough to have sneaked inside Iran; placed sophisticated, magnetized bombs on the vehicles of four of the five scientists; managed to flood the house of a fifth with carbon monoxide; and escaped safely to Tel Aviv.

FULL TEXT

The latest literary sensation in Tehran is a thriller about Iran's nuclear program that is laden with espionage, cunning and political murder. But its authors are not former Iranian intelligence operatives or Iranian military fiction writers. They are not the Iranian equivalent of Tom Clancy.

The book, "Spies Against Armageddon: Inside Israel's Secret Wars," has set off a buzz among both government and opposition news media inside Iran for the assertion by its authors – Yossi Melman, widely regarded as a leading Israeli military and intelligence journalist, and Dan Raviv, a CBS national political correspondent – that five Iranian nuclear scientists killed in the past five years were all assassinated by operatives, most likely of Persian Jewish heritage, employed by Mossad, Israel's intelligence agency.

Israel has neither confirmed nor denied it is responsible for the assassinations.

Iranian news sources view the book, published Monday in English by Levant Books, a small company in Sea Cliff,

N.Y., as an Israeli-written work exposing something the Israeli authorities do not want the world to know.

"Spies Against Armageddon" offers a broad overview of a widely reported Israeli campaign to sabotage Iran's nuclear program, which Israeli authorities contend is a guise for developing nuclear weapons, an accusation the Iranians strenuously deny.

But the book's assertion that the assassins were all Mossad agents who used agency safe houses maintained inside Iran since the era of the shah is new.

Iran's state-financed Press TV focused in a Persian-language article on the book's assertion that a Mossad unit known as Kidon – meaning Tip of the Spear in Hebrew, and responsible for assassinations and kidnapping – sent operatives to Tehran to carry out the assassinations over the past five years.

The Press TV report focused on the operatives' nationality, pointing out that almost all the assassins employed by Kidon were either Iranian nationals or had dual citizenship. The implication was that they were citizens of Iran and Israel. Most people who hold such citizenship are of Iranian Jewish extraction.

A Web site whose Persian name translates to Soft War, which is dedicated to documenting all forms of "psychological operations and soft war" against Iran, ridicules the book's assertions as "the biggest joke of the century," specifically the claim that Mossad operatives are skilled enough to have sneaked inside Iran; placed sophisticated, magnetized bombs on the vehicles of four of the five scientists; managed to flood the house of a fifth with carbon monoxide; and escaped safely to Tel Aviv.

There are no plans to translate the book into Persian, but interest has spread across the political spectrum, as Iranian reformist newspapers have rushed to summarize and translate its contents. Political blogs on both the left and the right have written analyses and commentary.

The authors base their conclusions on reporting of public interviews, statements by Israeli leaders, leaked State Department cables and off-the-record meetings between the authors and Israeli officials.

But they do not cite sources for their assertions about the assassins' nationalities or religious beliefs, which have gathered the greatest reaction in the Iranian press, or their statement that the assassinations were "blue and white," meaning carried out by Israeli agents from start to finish.

Mr. Raviv refers to the book's style as "synthesis," assertions stated as facts, without citing interviews, quotations or even anonymous sources.

The question of the assassins' nationalities has been of special interest in Iran, where a suspect in one of the attacks was hanged last month. Officials announced the arrest last month of a group of suspects, describing them as agents of what Iran calls the Zionist regime without identifying their nationalities. Though the book is unlikely to end speculation about who is responsible for the covert assassination campaign against Iran's nuclear scientists, its assertions correspond with a longstanding assumption among many security experts in Washington's policy circles.

DETAILS

Subject:	Espionage; Assassinations & assassination attempts; Nuclear weapons; Books; International relations
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LINKS

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Document 3 of 19

U.S. General Visits Israel For Discussions on Iran

Bronner, Ethan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]20 Jan 2012: A.6.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Israel on Thursday for a 24-hour visit with the country's top leaders that is expected to focus on Iran's nuclear program as well as the challenges posed by the past year's regional upheavals and the American military exit from Iraq.

FULL TEXT

JERUSALEM -- Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Israel on Thursday for a 24-hour visit with the country's top leaders that is expected to focus on Iran's nuclear program as well as the challenges posed by the past year's regional upheavals and the American military exit from Iraq.

This is General Dempsey's first visit to Israel since taking over as chairman in October, and he is to meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Shimon Peres, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz, the military chief of staff. He will also visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum. He arrives after a visit to Europe.

Israel and the United States both say that Iran is pursuing the building of nuclear weapons -- an assertion denied by Tehran -- but they have had differing views on how aggressive the pursuit has been and what should be done about it. Both countries say that if Iran achieved that goal it would pose enormous dangers to them, their allies and Iran's neighbors and would set off a lethal nuclear arms race in a highly unstable region. Both say they are committed to preventing Iran from building nuclear weapons.

Israel has frequently raised the possibility of military action against Iran if other means fail to halt Tehran's nuclear work, but it would prefer to have the United States take the lead.

The Americans, while agreeing that force could be a last resort, have said that the first steps must be diplomacy and sanctions. Israel has publicly agreed that if sanctions are sufficiently tough, they could have the desired effect because the Iranian economy is shaky and the government may well respond to such measures.

Mr. Netanyahu said last week that he noticed that Iran was wobbling under the current sanctions and then said later that even stronger ones were needed. And Mr. Barak said on Wednesday that any Israeli decision on military action against Iran was "far off." There has been widespread speculation that American officials like General Dempsey are sent here to get to the bottom of Israeli intentions or to persuade the Israelis not to take what the United States regards as rash action. Mr. Barak denied that such an effort was the point of this trip, however, saying, "The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is not coming with a view to putting pressure on the state of Israel."

This week, the Israelis announced that a huge joint military exercise with American troops planned for the spring had been postponed to the second half of the year, apparently to reduce regional tensions.

Israeli officials say that while the two countries view the intelligence on Iranian nuclear endeavors in the same way, Israel feels more vulnerable about them. It is especially worried about Iran's recent decision to move some uranium enrichment to a site deep underground, making any attack less likely to succeed. Officials here speak of their concern about Iranian "zones of immunity" that will make stopping the construction of weapons much harder.

But there is a strong strain of thought here and more so abroad that says an Israeli attack on Iran could be

catastrophic, prompting a military counterattack as well as further radicalizing the region and isolating Israel.

Apart from sanctions and plans for military action, it appears that Israel, the United States and other Western countries have disrupted Iran's nuclear program through sabotage: the sale of faulty parts and the introduction of computer worms and malfunctions. Five Iranian nuclear scientists have also been killed under mysterious circumstances. Iran has vowed to avenge their deaths.

For President Obama, tensions over Iran could make his re-election this year more complicated, especially if oil and gasoline prices rise as a result, causing hardship for American consumers. But his Republican opponents are much more hawkish on Iran and Israel's other enemies so he faces pressure from both directions.

Iran's intentions seem only more alarming to Israeli strategists as country after country in the region has undergone radical change and the power of political Islam grows.

DETAILS

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Document 4 of 19

Military Drill With the U.S. Is Postponed, Israeli Says

Kershner, Isabel . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]17 Jan 2012: A.9.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The move appears intended to avoid further escalating tensions with Iran, which is under intense international diplomatic and economic pressure to curb its nuclear program out of fears that it is seeking to make a nuclear bomb.

FULL TEXT

JERUSALEM -- Israel and the United States have agreed to postpone major joint missile-defense exercises that had been scheduled for the spring because of regional tensions and instability, according to Israel's foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman.

The move appears intended to avoid further escalating tensions with Iran, which is under intense international diplomatic and economic pressure to curb its nuclear program out of fears that it is seeking to make a nuclear bomb. Iran itself recently held 10 days of naval exercises near the Strait of Hormuz, and Israel has kept open the possibility of a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities.

At the same time, the United States is leading an effort to increase sanctions on Iran, and an Iranian nuclear scientist was assassinated in Tehran, the fourth such attack reported in two years. Iran blames the United States and Israel for the killings.

Speaking Monday on Israel Radio, Mr. Lieberman cited "diplomatic and regional reasons, the tensions and instability" as factors in delaying the exercise. The Israeli military said in a statement that the joint exercise, Austere Challenge 12, would take place during the second half of the year.

The exercises, involving thousands of American and Israeli soldiers, were designed to test various Israeli and American air defense systems against missiles and rockets from a range that would include Iran, The Associated Press reported.

The American defense secretary, Leon E. Panetta, said last month that the drill exemplified unprecedented levels of military cooperation between the two countries and that it was meant to back up Washington's "unshakable" commitment to Israel's security, The A.P. said.

Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said Israel and the United States made the decision to delay the exercise "because it was not the right time." He did not elaborate. Israeli officials have saluted the effectiveness of existing sanctions against Iran while also urging more, specifically on Iran's Central Bank and its petrochemical sector.

In an interview published Saturday in The Weekend Australian, Mr. Netanyahu said he was seeing Iran "wobble" for the first time. "If these sanctions are coupled with a clear statement by the international community, led by the U.S., to act militarily to stop Iran if sanctions fail," he said, "Iran may consider not going through the pain." On Sunday, Moshe Yaalon, a vice prime minister and minister of strategic affairs, described the Obama administration's failure to add more sanctions as "a disappointment so far."

"The administration is hesitating because of fears of rising oil prices this year, apparently out of election year considerations," he told Israel Radio.

On Monday, Mr. Netanyahu told a closed meeting of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that sanctions on Iran had to be increased and implemented expeditiously and aggressively, according to a participant in the meeting.

DETAILS

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Document 5 of 19

Iran Signals Revenge Over Killing Of Scientist

Gladstone, Rick . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]13 Jan 2012: A.10.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

News of the scientist's killing dominated Iran's state-run news media, which were filled with vitriolic denunciations both of Israel, seen in Iran as the main suspect in his death, and the United States, where top officials have gone out of their way to issue strongly worded denials of responsibility.

FULL TEXT

CORRECTION APPENDED

Iran expressed deepening fury at Israel and the United States on Thursday over the drive-by bombing that killed a nuclear scientist in Tehran the day before, and signaled that its Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps might carry out revenge assassinations.

News of the scientist's killing dominated Iran's state-run news media, which were filled with vitriolic denunciations both of Israel, seen in Iran as the main suspect in his death, and the United States, where top officials have gone out of their way to issue strongly worded denials of responsibility.

Israeli officials, who regard Iran as their country's main enemy, have not categorically denied any Israeli role in the killing, which came against a backdrop of growing pressure on Iran over its disputed nuclear program. Western nations suspect that Iran is working toward building a nuclear weapon, despite Iran's repeated assertions that its program is peaceful.

Iran's official government reaction to the scientist's killing on Wednesday was more restrained, saying that Iran would not be dissuaded from its right to peaceful nuclear energy and demanding that the United Nations Security Council investigate and condemn the attack. The Iranian ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazaee, said in a letter to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that the killing was part of a campaign of terrorist acts against Iran committed by "certain foreign quarters," an oblique reference to Israel and the United States.

A much stronger call for retribution came Thursday from one Iranian newspaper in particular, Kayhan, a mouthpiece for the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and for the Revolutionary Guards.

"We should retaliate against Israel for martyring of our young scientist," Kayhan's general director, Hossein Shariatmadari, who was appointed by the ayatollah, said in an editorial. Referring to the Israelis, he wrote, "These corrupted people are easily identifiable and readily within our reach."

The Kayhan editorial, as translated by Agence France-Presse and other Western news services, also said, "The Islamic republic has gathered much experience in 32 years, thus assassinations of Israeli officials and military members are achievable."

Another hard-line newspaper, Resalat, said, "The only way to finish with the enemy's futile actions is retaliation for the assassination of Iran's scientist."

Ayatollah Khamenei added his voice to the condemnations from Iran, posting a condolence message on his Web site that accused the American and Israeli intelligence services of orchestrating the "cowardly murder" of the scientist, who is to be buried on Friday. "Punish the perpetrators of these crimes," he wrote.

The scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, 32, was deputy director of the Natanz uranium enrichment plant. He was killed on his way to work in rush-hour traffic in Tehran on Wednesday morning. Iranian news accounts said that a motorcyclist slapped a magnetized bomb on his car, killing Mr. Roshan and mortally wounding his driver and bodyguard, identified as Reza Qashaqi.

Mr. Roshan was at least the fifth Iranian scientist with nuclear connections to be killed since 2007.

Kayhan's account of Mr. Roshan's death quoted his mother, Sediqeh Salari, as saying: "They assassinated my son to remind us how much they hate our guts, to show their hostility. These are Iran's sworn enemies."

The scientists' deaths are part of what current and former American officials and specialists on Iran have called an accelerating covert campaign of assassinations, bombings, defections and digital attacks, which they believe has been carried out mainly by Israel in an effort to subvert Iran's nuclear program.

Correction: January 13, 2012, Friday

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction: An article on Thursday about covert actions to set back Iran's nuclear program misstated, in some editions, the title of an Iranian nuclear scientist who was killed in a car bombing on Wednesday in Tehran. The scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, was deputy director – not director – of commercial affairs at the Natanz uranium enrichment site.

Credit: RICK GLADSTONE; Artin Afkhami contributed reporting.

DETAILS

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Document 6 of 19

Iran Adversaries Said To Step Up Covert Actions

Scott, Shane . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]12 Jan 2012: A.1.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, was a department supervisor at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant, a participant in what Western leaders believe is Iran's halting but determined progress toward a nuclear weapon. The statements by the United States appeared to reflect serious concern about the growing number of lethal attacks, which some experts believe could backfire by undercutting future negotiations and prompting Iran to redouble what the West suspects is a quest for a nuclear capacity.

FULL TEXT

CORRECTION APPENDED

WASHINGTON – As arguments flare in Israel and the United States about a possible military strike to set back Iran's nuclear program, an accelerating covert campaign of assassinations, bombings, cyberattacks and defections appears intended to make that debate irrelevant, according to current and former American officials and specialists on Iran.

The campaign, which experts believe is being carried out mainly by Israel, apparently claimed its latest victim on Wednesday when a bomb killed a 32-year-old nuclear scientist in Tehran's morning rush hour.

The scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, was a department supervisor at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant, a participant in what Western leaders believe is Iran's halting but determined progress toward a nuclear weapon. He

was at least the fifth scientist with nuclear connections to be killed since 2007; a sixth scientist, Fereydoon Abbasi, survived a 2010 attack and was put in charge of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization.

Iranian officials immediately blamed both Israel and the United States for the latest death, which came less than two months after a suspicious explosion at an Iranian missile base that killed a top general and 16 other people. While American officials deny a role in lethal activities, the United States is believed to engage in other covert efforts against the Iranian nuclear program.

The assassination drew an unusually strong condemnation from the White House and the State Department, which disavowed any American complicity. The statements by the United States appeared to reflect serious concern about the growing number of lethal attacks, which some experts believe could backfire by undercutting future negotiations and prompting Iran to redouble what the West suspects is a quest for a nuclear capacity.

"The United States had absolutely nothing to do with this," said Tommy Vietor, a spokesman for the National Security Council. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton appeared to expand the denial beyond Wednesday's killing, "categorically" denying "any United States involvement in any kind of act of violence inside Iran."

"We believe that there has to be an understanding between Iran, its neighbors and the international community that finds a way forward for it to end its provocative behavior, end its search for nuclear weapons and rejoin the international community," Mrs. Clinton said.

The Israeli military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yoav Mordechai, writing on Facebook about the attack, said, "I don't know who took revenge on the Iranian scientist, but I am definitely not shedding a tear," Israeli news media reported.

Like the drone strikes that the Obama administration has embraced as a core tactic against Al Qaeda, the multifaceted covert campaign against Iran has appeared to offer an alternative to war. But at most it has slowed, not halted, Iran's enrichment of uranium, a potential fuel for a nuclear weapon. And some skeptics believe that it may harden Iran's resolve or set a dangerous precedent for a strategy that could be used against the United States and its allies.

Neither Israeli nor American officials will discuss the covert campaign in any detail, leaving some uncertainty about the perpetrators and their purpose. For instance, Karim Sadjadpour, an Iran expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said he believed that at least some of the murdered scientists might have been killed by the Iranian government. Some of them had shown sympathy for the Iranian opposition, he said, and not all appeared to have been high-ranking experts.

"I think there is reason to doubt the idea that all the hits have been carried out by Israel," Mr. Sadjadpour said. "It's very puzzling that Iranian nuclear scientists, whose movements are likely carefully monitored by the state, can be executed in broad daylight, sometimes in rush-hour traffic, and their culprits never found."

A more common view, however, is expressed by Patrick Clawson, director of the Iran Security Initiative at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "I often get asked when Israel might attack Iran," Mr. Clawson said. "I say, 'Two years ago.'"

Mr. Clawson said the covert campaign was far preferable to overt airstrikes by Israel or the United States on suspected Iranian nuclear sites. "Sabotage and assassination is the way to go, if you can do it," he said. "It doesn't

provoke a nationalist reaction in Iran, which could strengthen the regime. And it allows Iran to climb down if it decides the cost of pursuing a nuclear weapon is too high."

A former senior Israeli security official, who would speak of the covert campaign only in general terms and on the condition of anonymity, said the uncertainty about who was responsible was useful. "It's not enough to guess," he said. "You can't prove it, so you can't retaliate. When it's very, very clear who's behind an attack, the world behaves differently."

The former Israeli official noted that Iran carried out many assassinations of enemies, mostly Iranian opposition figures, during the 1980s and 1990s, and had been recently accused of plotting to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States in Washington.

"In Arabic, there's a proverb: If you are shooting, don't complain about being shot," he said. But he portrayed the killings and bombings as part of a larger Israeli strategy to prevent all-out war.

"I think the cocktail of diplomacy, of sanctions, of covert activity might bring us something," the former official said. "I think it's the right policy while we still have time."

Israel has used assassination as a tool of statecraft since its creation in 1948, historians say, killing dozens of Palestinian and other militants and a small number of foreign scientists, military officials or people accused of being Holocaust collaborators.

But there is no exact precedent for what appears to be the current campaign against Iran, involving Israel and the United States and a broad array of methods.

The assassinations have been carried out primarily by motorcyclists who attach magnetic bombs to the victim's car, often in heavy traffic, before speeding away.

Iran's Mehr news agency said Wednesday's explosion took place on Gol Nabi Street, on Mr. Roshan's route to work, at 8:20 a.m. The news agency said the scientist, who also taught at a technical university, was deputy director of commercial affairs at the Natanz site, evidently in charge of buying equipment and materials. Two other people were wounded, and one later died in a hospital, Iranian officials said.

Iran's ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammad Khazaee, sent a letter of protest to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, blaming "certain foreign quarters" for what he called "terrorist acts" aimed at disrupting Iran's "peaceful nuclear program, under the false assumption that diplomacy alone would not be enough for that purpose."

The ambassador's letter complained of sabotage, a possible reference to the Stuxnet computer worm, believed to be a joint American-Israeli project, that reportedly led to the destruction in 2010 of about a fifth of the centrifuges Iran uses to enrich uranium. It also said the covert campaign included "a military strike on Iran," evidently a reference to a mysterious explosion that destroyed much of an Iranian missile base on Nov. 12.

That explosion, which Iran experts say they believe was probably an Israeli effort, killed Gen. Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, who was in charge of Iran's missile program. Satellite photographs show multiple buildings at the site leveled or heavily damaged.

The C.I.A., according to current and former officials, has repeatedly tried to derail Iran's uranium enrichment

program by covert means, including introducing sabotaged parts into Iran's supply chain.

In addition, the agency is believed to have encouraged some Iranian nuclear scientists to defect, an effort that came to light in 2010 when a scientist, Shahram Amiri, who had come to the United States, claimed to have been kidnapped by the C.I.A. and returned to Iran. (Press reports say he has since been arrested and tried for treason.) A former deputy defense minister, Ali-Reza Asgari, disappeared while visiting Turkey in 2006 and is widely believed to have defected, possibly to the United States.

William C. Banks, an expert on national security law at Syracuse University, said he believed that for the United States even to provide specific intelligence to Israel to help kill an Iranian scientist would violate a longstanding executive order banning assassinations. The legal rationale for drone strikes against terrorist suspects – that the United States is at war with Al Qaeda and its allies – would not apply, he said.

"Under international law, aiding and abetting would be the same as pulling the trigger," Mr. Banks said. He added, "We would be in a precarious position morally, and the entire world is watching, especially China and Russia."

Gary Sick, a specialist on Iran at Columbia, said he believed that the covert campaign, combined with sanctions, would not persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear work.

"It's important to turn around and ask how the U.S. would feel if our revenue was being cut off, our scientists were being killed and we were under cyberattack," Mr. Sick said. "Would we give in, or would we double down? I think we'd fight back, and Iran will, too."

Correction: January 13, 2012, Friday

An article on Thursday about covert actions to set back Iran's nuclear program misstated, in some editions, the title of an Iranian nuclear scientist who was killed in a car bombing on Wednesday in Tehran. The scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, was deputy director – not director – of commercial affairs at the Natanz uranium enrichment site.

Credit: SCOTT SHANE; Reporting was contributed by Steven Lee Myers from Washington, David E. Sanger from Cairo, Alan Cowell from London and Rick Gladstone from New York.

Photograph

The Scientist, Mostafa Ahmadi Roshan, Was a Supervisor at a Uranium Enrichment Plant. (Photograph by Fars News Agency, Via E.P.A); a Bomb Attached to a Car Killed an Iranian Nuclear Scientist in Tehran On Wednesday. The United States Condemned the Attack. (Photograph by Mehdi Marizad/Fars News Agency, Via Associated Press) (A12)

CHART: Attacks on Iran's Nuclear Program: Iran has blamed Israel and the United States for attacks on its nuclear scientists and facilities in recent years. (A12)

DETAILS

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Explosion Seen As Big Setback To Iran Missiles

ABSTRACT

The huge explosion that destroyed a major missile-testing site near Tehran three weeks ago was a major setback for Iran's most advanced long-range missile program, according to American and Israeli intelligence officials and missile technology experts.

FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON – The huge explosion that destroyed a major missile-testing site near Tehran three weeks ago was a major setback for Iran's most advanced long-range missile program, according to American and Israeli intelligence officials and missile technology experts.

In interviews, current and former officials said surveillance photos showed that the Iranian base was a central testing center for advanced solid-fuel missiles, an assessment backed by outside experts who have examined satellite photos showing that the base was almost completely leveled in the blast. Such missiles can be launched almost instantly, making them useful to Iran as a potential deterrent against pre-emptive attacks by Israel or the United States, and they are also better suited than older liquid-fuel designs for carrying warheads long distances. It is still unclear what caused the explosion, with American officials saying they believe it was probably an accident, perhaps because of Iran's inexperience with a volatile, dangerous technology. Iran declared it an accident, but subsequent discussions of the episode in the Iranian news media have referred to the chief of Iran's missile program as one of the "martyrs" killed in the huge explosion. Some Iranian officials have talked of sabotage, but it is unclear whether that is based on evidence or surmise after several years in which Iranian nuclear scientists have been assassinated on Tehran's streets, and a highly sophisticated computer worm has attacked its main uranium production facility.

Both American and Israeli officials, in discussing the explosion in recent days, showed little curiosity about its cause. "Anything that buys us time and delays the day when the Iranians might be able to mount a nuclear weapon on an accurate missile is a small victory," one Western intelligence official who has been deeply involved in countering the Iranian nuclear program said this weekend. "At this point, we'll take whatever we can get, however it happens."

In addition to providing a potential deterrent to attackers, Iran's advances in solid-fuel missile technology, and the concern it could eventually have intercontinental reach, have been at the heart of the Obama administration's insistence on the need for new missile-defense programs.

As concerns about Iran's intentions have deepened in the West, intense surveillance efforts have been turned on suspected Iranian weapons sites. Iran has frequently accused the United States and Israel of spying and sabotage programs, and on Sunday made another such claim, saying it had shot down an advanced American RQ-170 drone in eastern Iran.

That particular drone is among the most sensitive in the American fleet, and if the report is true it would mean Iran had gained at least partial access to closely guarded American technology. A stealth version of the drone was flown for hours, on repeated occasions, over Osama bin Laden's hide-out in Abbottabad, Pakistan, earlier this year, without being detected by Pakistani air defenses, American officials said. There have been reports for months, all

unconfirmed, that the same drone was being used regularly over Iran, presumably to hunt for hidden nuclear or missile sites.

In a statement on Sunday, the American-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan said that the drone "to which the Iranians are referring may be a U.S. unarmed reconnaissance aircraft that had been flying a mission over western Afghanistan late last week." It added that operators of the remotely controlled drone aircraft lost control of it "and had been working to determine its status." The statement did not say what kind of drone was lost, or what might have caused the loss.

The statement would seem to suggest that the craft wrongly flew across the border into Iran. If a drone was used for intelligence gathering in Iran, it presumably would not belong to the military -- since there are no open hostilities with Iran -- but rather to the C.I.A. or another intelligence agency, acting under a presidential finding about the Iranian nuclear program.

One of the many theories swirling around the explosion at the missile base is that it could have been hit by a weapon, including one fired from a drone, setting off the huge explosion that followed. But since no outsiders can approach the base or gather evidence, it is unclear whether it will ever be known publicly what triggered the explosion.

Even if the cause was an accident -- and the United States has suffered some with its own solid-fuel motors -- several officials said that it was a major setback for Iran's effort to focus much of its industrial prowess on that kind of missile.

Missiles powered by solid fuels rather than liquids have no need for trucks to fill them with volatile fluids, and can be fired on short notice, making them hard for other nations to destroy before they are launched. That would add to Iran's ability to protect its nuclear sites from an Israeli strike -- a subject of renewed debate in Israel in recent weeks -- because Iran could threaten to retaliate before many of its missiles were struck. Solid-fuel missiles are also easier to hide. For those reasons, modern militaries rely on solid fuels for their deadliest missiles.

Moreover, at a time Iran is being squeezed by sanctions, the country has succeeded in making the solid-fuel engines with indigenous technology. For liquid-fueled engines, many key components come from abroad.

In a recent report, the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London called Iran's shift to solid-fuel engines "a turning point" with "profound strategic implications" because the technology also brings Tehran closer to its goal of making long-range missiles. In its report three weeks ago, the International Atomic Energy Agency laid out, for the first time in public, detailed evidence it says suggests that Iran worked at some point in the past decade on designing a nuclear warhead that would fit atop its missile fleet.

Partly for that reason, Western officials said, many of the sanctions imposed on Iran by the United Nations Security Council seek to block its import of rocket parts.

Last week, the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington, released a commercial satellite image of the destroyed base.

It called Iran's labors there integral to "a major milestone in the development of a new missile."

Government and private analysts described the blast at the military base, which occurred Nov. 12 and killed Gen. Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, the head of Iran's missile program, as a major setback -- not just because of the extensive damage to the site but also because of the loss of expertise from the specialists working there.

General Moghaddam's funeral was attended by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "That was a statement of how central Moghaddam's work was," one American intelligence official said.

The sprawling complex where the blast took place has expanded dramatically in the last few years. Michael Elleman, a main author of the International Institute's 148-page report on Iranian missiles, examined the public images of the destroyed base and said in an interview that the damage and other evidence was consistent with solid-fuel technology.

Mr. Elleman added that the desert area around the base bristled with military compounds and networks of buildings and bunkers -- all plainly visible in Google Earth images. Security cordons ringed the bases.

He noted that the region south of the destroyed base, roughly one and five miles distant, held two separate complexes that carried the distinctive signature of a firing range for solid fuels.

The closer of the two sites has eight test stands in a row, and the desert next to them had been clearly scorched by fiery plumes. In such tests, missile engines are mounted horizontally and shoot their blasts straight out.

The more distant complex has three test stands in a row, the middle one bearing bold scorch marks from a recent firing.

Credit: DAVID E. SANGER and WILLIAM J. BROAD; David E. Sanger reported from Washington, and William J. Broad from New York.

Photograph

Photos Released by the Institute for Science and International Security Show an Iranian Missile-Testing Site Before, Left, and After a Nov. 12 Explosion Destroyed It. (Photographs by Geoeye Via Google Earth; Digitalglobe) MAP: It is unclear what caused the explosion at the base.

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U.S. Plans New Sanctions Against Iran's Oil Industry

MARK LANDLER and ALAN COWELL . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]19 Nov 2011: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The Obama administration plans to impose a new round of sanctions against Iran's petrochemical industry, a Western official briefed on the plans said Friday, less than two weeks after a United Nations report published evidence that the Iranian government was working on a nuclear weapon.

FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration plans to impose a new round of sanctions against Iran's petrochemical industry, a Western official briefed on the plans said Friday, less than two weeks after a United Nations report published evidence that the Iranian government was working on a nuclear weapon.

The sanctions, expected to be announced on Monday, build on existing measures against Iran's oil and gas industry, which aim to curb foreign investment in refineries or other facilities. European nations are expected to announce similar measures when their leaders meet later in the week, the official said.

The sanctions come after the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, rebuked Tehran on Friday, but stopped short of threatening further pressure or actions to curb its contentious uranium enrichment program.

In the wake of the report, the United States has been working to build international support for new sanctions. Much of its focus has been on cutting off the Iranian central bank or placing further curbs on the petroleum industry.

But there are hurdles to sanctioning Iran's central bank, because China, Japan and other countries rely on it to process transactions for purchases of oil. The White House is also reluctant to undertake measures that could lead to spikes in oil prices and rattle a fragile American economy.

While the details of the new sanctions were sketchy – and the Treasury Department declined to comment – the official said they were focused more on investments in Iran's petrochemical industry than on cutting off sales of oil, which could disrupt the market.

Meanwhile, the criticism from the nuclear agency drew an immediate and sharp response from Iran, which maintains that the evidence for the agency's report was fabricated by enemies of the Islamic Republic. An Iranian envoy insisted that his country would not be deterred "for a second" from a nuclear program it says is for peaceful purposes. The diplomat also said Iran would boycott a planned meeting next week of Middle Eastern countries, called to discuss ways of freeing the world of nuclear weapons.

The exchanges came at the end of a two-day closed meeting of the 35-member board of governors of the atomic energy agency at its headquarters in Vienna. The agency's report last week drew on a vast trove of evidence to conclude that there was a "credible" case that Iran engaged in secret and possibly continuing efforts to construct a nuclear weapon.

The concluding resolution, approved overwhelmingly, did not refer to punitive measures against Iran, or send the matter to the Security Council for action, reflecting the diplomatic balance between Western powers eager to crank up pressure on Iran and two leading powers in the diplomacy, Russia and China, that have adopted a milder line.

The resolution expressed "deep and increasing concern about the unresolved issues regarding the Iranian nuclear program," and urged Iran to return to talks and restrain its nuclear work as outlined by prior Security Council resolutions. The board approved the statement by 32 to 2, with Cuba and Ecuador opposing it and Indonesia abstaining.

The resolution did not set deadlines for Iran to comply with the agency's demand for access to nuclear sites for its inspectors and greater openness about the country's nuclear program.

In a statement, the White House welcomed the agency's sharp criticism of Iran, emphasizing the completeness of the case against Iran made by the agency's report. "The Director General's report and today's action by the Board of Governors expose once and for all the hollowness of Iran's claims, and reinforce the world's demands that Iran come clean and live up to its international obligations," the statement said.

The Iranian envoy to the agency, Ali Asghar Soltanieh, said his country would not halt uranium enrichment for even "a second," Reuters reported, after having earlier dismissed the resolution's mandates as "not legally binding, thus

they are not applicable."

Mr. Soltanieh said his country would not participate in the planned gathering next week, under the agency's auspices, of Middle Eastern countries, likely to include Israel and Arab states.

Western powers that have long pressed for Iran to halt its nuclear enrichment program – the United States, Britain, France and Germany – appear to have been unable to use the unexpectedly strong agency report to create a consensus for stronger action. Instead, the relatively mild resolution reflected lengthy and intense diplomatic wrangling with Russia and China, the other countries most directly involved.

Earlier, Mr. Soltanieh accused the nuclear agency of endangering the lives of Iranian scientists by releasing their names in an annex to last week's report about the suspicions of nuclear weapons work.

"The release of the names of the Iranian nuclear scientists by the agency has made them targets for assassination by terrorist groups as well as the Israeli regime and the U.S. intelligence services," he said in a letter to the body's director general, Yukiya Amano.

Parts of the letter were published by Iran's state-financed Press TV satellite broadcaster, which noted that several Iranian nuclear scientists had been killed in incidents attributed by Iran to Israeli, British and American intelligence services.

Mr. Soltanieh contended that disclosing the names of Iranian experts represented a violation of the agency's rules and said Tehran reserved the right to seek damages from the agency for any harm to its personnel or property as a result of the report – a possible reference to Tehran's frequently voiced fears of an Israeli military strike on its nuclear facilities.

The agency's report has amplified talk of a potential Israeli attack, a move that Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said last week would have a "serious impact" on the Middle East and possibly on American forces in the region, without seriously disrupting Iran's nuclear program.

On Friday, Mr. Panetta planned to meet Ehud Barak, his Israeli counterpart, and indicated that he would speak of potential "unintended consequences" from a military strike. He was speaking to reporters traveling with him to a security forum in Canada, where he is to meet with Mr. Barak.

Credit: MARK LANDLER and ALAN COWELL; Mark L andler reported from Washington, and Alan Cowell from London.

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Document 9 of 19

Israel Lobbies Discreetly for More Sanctions After U.N. Report on Iran

Kershner, Isabel . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]14 Nov 2011: A.10.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The atomic agency's report said that Iran had worked on experiments with explosives to start a chain reaction that ends in nuclear explosion, that it was working on "at least 14 progressive design iterations" for an atomic missile warhead, and that it had nearly five metric tons of low-enriched uranium and at least 70 kilograms of 20 percent enriched uranium, enough, experts said, to potentially produce three or four cores for nuclear devices with further enrichment.

FULL TEXT

JERUSALEM – Israel hopes that a United Nations report released last week cataloging suspect activities in Iran's nuclear program will finally force major countries to make sanctions painful enough that Iran will stop its uranium enrichment program.

But officials and experts here say that Israel must not be seen as leading that effort, and they acknowledge that when it comes to imposing sanctions, Israel has little influence anyway.

Where Israel seems to be playing a larger role is in convincing Iran and the West that if no drastic change occurs in the next few months, Israel might be pushed into military action.

Israel has quietly mobilized diplomats to press for stricter sanctions in foreign capitals.

Their efforts have been bolstered by a flurry of speculative news reports and leaks about possible plans for an Israeli attack on Iranian nuclear facilities, along with Israel's testing of a ballistic missile this month.

Whether those reports were intended, in part, to prod Western powers to act is impossible to know. Officials insist that the missile test, on a weekday morning in full view of Tel Aviv commuters on their way to work, had been long planned and was carried out as scheduled.

Publicly, Israel is keeping a low profile.

Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, waited until Sunday, five days after the release of the International Atomic Energy Agency report, to make his first public remarks on it.

"The international community must stop Iran's race to arm itself with nuclear weapons, a race that endangers the peace of the entire world," he said at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting, where ministers received a briefing on the report.

Israeli officials say that a new round of crippling sanctions against Iran could still be effective, even if Russian and Chinese objections preclude a United Nations Security Council resolution. Other nations could still take action to hobble Iran diplomatically, economically and technologically.

"Iran purports to want a regional and global role, and therefore does not want to be isolated and in a box like North Korea," said Jeremy Issacharoff, deputy director general for strategic affairs at Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Some Israelis have expressed concern that growing international annoyance with Israel over the Palestinian issue and antipathy toward Mr. Netanyahu could make cooperation over Iran more difficult. But Israeli officials say that where Iran is concerned, there is a convergence of understanding and interests. While Israel regards nuclear-armed Iran as potentially an existential threat, it also threatens moderate Arab states and could set off a destabilizing regional arms race.

Israeli officials consider the next few months crucial. The atomic agency's report said that Iran had worked on experiments with explosives to start a chain reaction that ends in nuclear explosion, that it was working on "at

least 14 progressive design iterations" for an atomic missile warhead, and that it had nearly five metric tons of low-enriched uranium and at least 70 kilograms of 20 percent enriched uranium, enough, experts said, to potentially produce three or four cores for nuclear devices with further enrichment.

The report did not speculate on the time it would take Iran to produce a nuclear weapon, but Israelis say it shows Iran is moving ever closer to the nuclear threshold while Western powers have been dragging their feet on action to stop it.

Some experts see the threat of military action as complementary to sanctions. "Only a combination of these two conditions might make Iran reconsider," said Ephraim Kam, deputy director of the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University.

While the news reports about Mr. Netanyahu and his defense minister, Ehud Barak, pressing for an Israeli attack were speculative and unverifiable, the possibility that they are true adds to their persuasive power.

Iran, at least, seems to be taking them seriously.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, warned last week that a military attack would be met with a "strong slap and iron fist," suggesting concern among Iranian leaders that the United Nations report could be used as a justification by Israel to bomb Iran.

A third leg of the efforts against Iran's nuclear program, covert action by Israel and the United States, while known to exist, has also been difficult to verify.

Most Israeli newspapers did not speculate openly about any possible Israeli involvement in a deadly blast this weekend at an Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps base near Tehran, which Iran said was an accident and not sabotage. But the newspapers added the explosion to a string of explosions, malfunctions and assassinations of Iranian scientists believed to have been involved in Iran's nuclear program, some of which have been attributed to Israel.

But some experts, including the former Israeli intelligence chief Meir Dagan, have questioned whether military action would be effective. Iran's stated intention to move some of its nuclear activity to an underground facility, largely out of reach of a military attack, could mean the window for such an attack is closing.

For now, sanctions to force Iran to decide that the effort is not worth the cost are the way forward, Israeli officials and experts say.

To be effective, according to Ephraim Asculai, an Israeli nuclear expert who worked at the Israel Atomic Energy Commission for more than 40 years and also at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, sanctions would have to include restrictions on personal travel for all Iranians and on Iranian civilian air traffic, as well as restrictions on the sale of oil distillates, a complete embargo on Western sales of nonhumanitarian goods and equipment to Iran and on dealings with its central bank.

All that stands between Iran and a nuclear weapon, said Mr. Asculai, now a senior fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, is a political decision by Iran to further enrich existing stocks of uranium.

"The Iranians have already passed any deadline you can think of," he said. But such draconian sanctions, he added, "could prevent Iran from taking the political decision."

Photograph

Outside Tel Aviv, in Holon, a Dummy Rocket Was Used in an Army Exercise This Month Simulating a Chemical Weapons Attack. (Photograph by Oliver Weiken/European Pressphoto Agency)

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America's Deadly Dynamics With Iran

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[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

A confidential study circulating through America's national laboratories estimates that the Stuxnet computer worm – the most sophisticated cyberweapon ever deployed against another country's infrastructure – slowed Iran's nuclear progress by one to two years. At the White House and the C.I.A., officials say the recently disclosed Iranian plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States – by blowing up a tony Georgetown restaurant frequented by senators, lobbyists and journalists – was just the tip of the iceberg.

FULL TEXT

COMMUTING to work in Tehran is never easy, but it is particularly nerve-racking these days for the scientists of Shahid Beheshti University. It was a little less than a year ago when one of them, Majid Shahriari, and his wife were stuck in traffic at 7:40 a.m. and a motorcycle pulled up alongside the car. There was a faint "click" as a magnet attached to the driver's side door. The huge explosion came a few seconds later, killing him and injuring his wife. On the other side of town, 20 minutes later, a nearly identical attack played out against Mr. Shahriari's colleague Fereydoon Abbasi, a nuclear scientist and longtime member of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. Perhaps because of his military training, Mr. Abbasi recognized what was happening, and pulled himself and his wife out the door just before his car turned into a fireball. Iran has charged that Israel was behind the attacks – and many outsiders believe the "sticky bombs" are the hallmarks of a Mossad hit.

Perhaps to make a point, Mr. Abbasi, now recovered from his injuries, has been made the director of Iran's atomic energy program. He travels the world offering assurances that Iran's interest in nuclear weapons is peaceful. Even for the Iranian scientists who get to work safely, life isn't a lot easier. A confidential study circulating through America's national laboratories estimates that the Stuxnet computer worm – the most sophisticated cyberweapon ever deployed against another country's infrastructure – slowed Iran's nuclear progress by one to two years. Now it has run its course. But there is no reason to believe the attacks are over.

Iran may be the most challenging test of the Obama administration's focus on new, cheap technologies that could avoid expensive boots on the ground; drones are the most obvious, cyberweapons the least discussed. It does not quite add up to a new Obama Doctrine, but the methods are defining a new era of nearly constant confrontation and containment. Drones are part of a tactic to keep America's adversaries off balance and preoccupied with defending themselves. And in the past two and a half years, they have been used more aggressively than ever. There are now five or six secret American drone bases around the world. Some recently discovered new computer worms suggest that a new, improved Stuxnet 2.0 may be in the works for Iran.

"There were a lot of mistakes made the first time," said an American official, avoiding any acknowledgment that the United States played a role in the cyber attack on Iran. "This was a first-generation product. Think of Edison's initial

light bulbs, or the Apple II."

Not surprisingly, the Iranians are refusing to sit back and take it -- which is one reason many believe the long shadow war with Iran is about to ramp up dramatically. At the White House and the C.I.A., officials say the recently disclosed Iranian plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States -- by blowing up a tony Georgetown restaurant frequented by senators, lobbyists and journalists -- was just the tip of the iceberg. American intelligence officials now believe that the death of a Saudi diplomat in Pakistan earlier this year was an assassination. And they see evidence of other plots by the Quds Force, the most elite Iranian military unit, from Yemen to Latin America.

"The Saudi plot was clumsy, and we got lucky," another American official who has reviewed the intelligence carefully said recently. "But we are seeing increasingly sophisticated Iranian activity like it, all around the world." Much of this resembles the worst days of the cold war, when Americans and Soviets were plotting against each other -- and killing each other -- in a now hazy attempt to preserve an upper hand. But Iran is no superpower. And there are reasons to wonder whether, in the end, this shadow war is simply going to delay the inevitable: an Iranian bomb or, more likely, an Iranian capability to assemble a fairly crude weapon in a matter of weeks or months.

For understandable reasons, this is a question no one in the Obama administration will answer publicly. To admit that Iran may ultimately get a weapon is to admit failure; both George W. Bush and Barack Obama vowed they would never let Iran achieve nuclear arms capability, much less a bomb. Israelis have long argued that if Iran got too close, that could justify attacking Iran's nuclear sites. Reports in Israel last week suggested that such a pre-emptive attack is once again being debated.

The worries focus on renewed hints from top Israeli officials that they will act unilaterally -- even over American objections -- if they judge that Iran is getting too close to a bomb. (It is worth noting that they have made similar noises every year since 2005, save for a brief hiatus when Stuxnet -- which appears to have been a joint project of American and Israeli intelligence -- was doing its work.)

To many members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government -- and, by the accounts of his former colleagues, to the Israeli leader himself -- the Iran problem is 1939 all over again, an "existential threat."

"WHEN Bibi talks about an existential threat," one senior Israeli official said of Mr. Netanyahu recently, "he means the kind of threat the United States believed it faced when you believed the Nazis could get the bomb."

Israelis worry that as Iran feels more isolated by sanctions and more threatened by the Arab Spring, which has not exactly broken Tehran's way, it may view racing for a bomb as the only way to restore itself to its position as the most influential power in the Middle East. The fate of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi may strengthen that impulse.

"One should ask: would Europe have intervened in Libya if Qaddafi had possessed nuclear weapons?" the Israeli defense minister, Ehud Barak, said on army radio last week, referring to the Libyan leader's decision to give up his program in 2003. "Would the U.S. have toppled Saddam Hussein if he had nuclear weapons?"

To many in the Obama administration, though, the Iranian threat seems more akin to 1949, when the Soviets tested their first nuclear device. That brought many confrontations that veered toward catastrophe, most notably the Cuban Missile Crisis. But ultimately the Soviets were contained. Inside the Pentagon and the National Security Council, there is a lot of work -- all of it unacknowledged -- about what a parallel containment strategy for Iran might look like.

The early elements of it are obvious: the antimissile batteries that the United States has spent billions of dollars installing on the territory of Arab allies, and a new Pentagon plan to put more ships and antimissile batteries into

the Persian Gulf, in cooperation with six Arab states led by Saudi Arabia. It was the Saudi king who famously advised American diplomats in the cables revealed by WikiLeaks last year that the only Iran strategy that would work was one that "cut off the head of the snake."

The big hitch in these containment strategies is that they are completely useless if Iran ever slips a bomb, or even some of its newly minted uranium fuel, to a proxy – Hezbollah, Hamas or some other terrorist group – raising the problem of ascertaining a bomb's return address. When the Obama administration ran some tabletop exercises soon after coming to office, it was shocked to discover that the science of nuclear forensics was nowhere near as good in practice as it was on television dramas. So if a bomb went off in some American city, or in Riyadh or Tel Aviv, it could be weeks or months before it was ever identified as Iranian. Even then, confidence in the conclusion, officials say, might be too low for the president to order retaliation.

The wisdom of a containment strategy has also taken a hit since the revelation of the plot to kill the Saudi ambassador. Emerging from a classified briefing on the plot, a member of Congress said what struck him was that "this thing could have gotten Iran into a war, and yet we don't know who ordered it." There is increasing talk that it could have been a rogue element within the Quds Force. If so, what does that say about whether the Iranian leadership has as good a hand on the throttle of Iran's nuclear research program as Washington has long assumed?

That issue may well come to a head this week after the International Atomic Energy Agency, the nuclear watchdog that has been playing a cat-and-mouse game with Iran's nuclear establishment for a decade now, issues what may be one of its toughest reports ever.

IF the leaks are an accurate predictor of the final product, the report will describe in detail the evidence the I.A.E.A. has amassed suggesting that Iran has conducted tests on nuclear trigger devices, wrestled with designs that can miniaturize a nuclear device into the small confines of a warhead, and conducted abstruse experiments to spark a nuclear reaction. Most likely, the agency will stop short of accusing Iran of running a bomb program; instead, it will use the evidence to demand answers that it has long been refused about what it delicately calls "possible military dimensions" of the nuclear program.

Much of the work on those "possible military dimensions" is done, the I.A.E.A. believes, by scientists who have day jobs at Iran's major universities, including one just across the street from what is believed to be the nuclear project's administrative center. Among the scientists was Mr. Abbasi, the survivor of last November's bomb attack, who was named in 2007 to the United Nations' list of Iranian scientists subject to travel bans and economic sanctions because they were believed to be central to the bomb-development effort.

Mr. Abbasi, according to people familiar with the I.A.E.A.'s investigation, worked on calculations on increasing the yield of nuclear explosions, among other problems in manufacturing a weapon. He was a key scientist in the Iranian covert nuclear weapons program headed by Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, an academic and strong supporter of Iran's nuclear weapons program. For the past decade, Mr. Fakhrizadeh has run programs – with names like "Project 110" and "Project 5," they seem right out of a James Bond movie – that the West believes are a shell game hiding weapons work. Suspicions have been heightened by Iran's refusal to allow him or his colleagues to be interviewed by the United Nations' nuclear inspection teams. And since last year's attacks – and another this past summer – Mr. Fakhrizadeh has gone completely underground.

No one expects the United Nations' revelations of the evidence to prompt more action against Iran. Most governments have had access to this evidence for a while. The Iranians will say it is all fabrication, and because the agency will not reveal its sources, that charge could stick. The Chinese and the Russians have already protested to the I.A.E.A. head, Yukiya Amano, that revealing the evidence will harden Iran's position. They oppose any new sanctions.

While the Obama administration may act unilaterally to shut down transactions with Iran's central bank, officials

concede that the only economic step that could give the mullahs pause would be a ban on Iranian oil exports. With oil already hovering around \$93 a barrel, no one in the administration is willing to risk a step that could send prices soaring and, in the worst case, cause a confrontation at sea over a blockade.

For all the talk about how "all options are on the table," Washington says a military strike isn't worth the risk of war; the Israelis say there may be no other choice. But they have said "this is the last chance" every year since 2005. All of which raises the question: how much more delay can be bought with a covert campaign of assassination, cyberattacks and sabotage?

Some more, but probably not much. It has taken the Iranians 20 years so far to get their nuclear act together – far longer than it took the United States and the Soviets in the '40s, the Chinese and the Israelis in the '60s, the Indians in the '70s, and the Pakistanis and the North Koreans in more recent times. The problem is partly that they were scammed by Abdul Qadeer Khan, the Pakistani who sold them his country's discards.

The assassination and the sabotage have taken a psychological toll, making scientists wonder if every trip to work may be their last, every line of code the beginning of a new round of destruction. Stuxnet was devilishly ingenious: it infected millions of computers, but did damage only when the code was transferred to special controllers that run centrifuges, which spin at supersonic speed when enriching uranium. When operators looked at their screens, everything looked normal. But downstairs in the plant, the centrifuges suddenly spun out of control and exploded, like small bombs. It took months for the Iranians to figure out what had happened.

But now the element of surprise is gone. The Iranians are digging their plants deeper underground, and enriching uranium at purities that will make it easier to race for a bomb. When Barack Obama was sworn into office, they had enough fuel on hand to produce a single weapon; today, by the I.A.E.A.'s own inventory, they have enough for at least four. And as the Quds Force has shown, sabotage and assassination is a two-way game, which may ratchet up one confrontation just as Americans have been exhausted by two others.

AuthorAffiliation

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Photograph

Demonstrators in Tehran Last Year Protested the Assassination of an Iranian Nuclear Scientist. (Photograph by Atta Kenare/Agence France-Presse--Getty Images)(Sr6)

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Allegations of Iranian and U.S. Plots Are Added to a History of Hostility

SCOTT SHANE and ARTIN AFKHAMI . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]15 Oct 2011: A.6.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The Iranian view of the United States as an enemy "is paranoid, but it's not inaccurate," said Mr. Gerecht, now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative research group. Since the appointment in 2007 of

Mohammad Ali Jafari as commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Iranian officials have promoted the idea of "soft war" between Iran and the West, suggesting that an insidious cultural invasion could undermine the theocracy.

FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON – When an Iranian scientist was shot and killed in front of his home in Tehran on July 23, he was the third researcher with supposed ties to Iran's nuclear program to be assassinated in less than two years.

A week later, \$49,960 was wired from a foreign bank account linked to Iran's Quds Force to a man posing as a Mexican drug hit man, the down payment on an alleged Iranian scheme to murder the Saudi ambassador to the United States.

The simultaneous unfolding of assassination plots in two countries might well be a coincidence. But if the Obama administration is right that the outlandish contract scheme to murder the ambassador was the work of Iranian officials, it is only the latest episode in a covert struggle that has played out for years involving Iran, the United States and an American ally, Israel.

"The Iranians absolutely believe the U.S. and Israel have been carrying out a covert campaign against them," said Gary Sick, an Iran expert at Columbia University. "And clearly they are right."

Mr. Sick, like many specialists, said he had trouble fully accepting the administration's interpretation of the suspected plot to kill the Saudi ambassador. The man prosecutors say was at the center of the scheme, a whiskey-drinking used-car dealer named Mansour J. Arbabsiar, seems an unlikely agent for the sophisticated Quds Force, the external arm of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, he said.

But he said the Guards, who oversee Iran's nuclear program and had ties to the murdered scientists, would be looking for ways to avenge or deter such attacks. "A mysterious killing in Washington might well look like payback for the scientists," he said. "It's the incompetence of this plot that's so hard to believe."

Speaking at Friday Prayer in January 2010, a hard-line cleric, Ayatollah Ahmad Alamolhoda, described the murder of scientists as "a sign of the all-out, multifront war that the enemy is fighting against us." He added, "We must know that to the extent there are attacks against us, it is necessary to defend ourselves to the same extent."

The killings, thought by most Western analysts to be the work of Israel, with tolerance from the United States, were far from the only bloody episodes in what has been largely a cold war.

Iran stands accused of providing powerful explosive devices to insurgents fighting American troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. The use of such surrogates dates virtually from the Islamic Revolution in 1979; American officials believe Iran was behind the bombings of the United States Embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983 and the strike against Air Force personnel at Khobar, Saudi Arabia, in 1996.

In recent years, Israel and the United States have worked assiduously to slow Iran's progress toward nuclear weapons. The C.I.A. has operated a "brain drain" project to lure Iranian nuclear researchers to the West, an effort glimpsed last year when a defecting scientist, Shahram Amiri, suddenly returned to Iran. (After a hero's welcome, he was imprisoned on treason charges, according to reports from Iran.)

Both countries are believed to have worked in recent years to sabotage Iran's program to enrich uranium, smuggling damaged components into Iran's supply chain and destroying centrifuges by planting the so-called Stuxnet computer worm.

That varied assault plays directly into the worldview of Iran's clerical leaders, said Reuel Marc Gerecht, who worked against Iran as a C.I.A. officer from 1985 to 1994.

The covert skirmishes, he said, "are part of what the Iranians call a titanic struggle between the faithful and the unbelievers, between Iran and the United States, the great Satan, with Israel as the little Satan." The Iranian view of the United States as an enemy "is paranoid, but it's not inaccurate," said Mr. Gerecht, now with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a conservative research group.

Since the appointment in 2007 of Mohammad Ali Jafari as commander of the Revolutionary Guards, Iranian officials have promoted the idea of "soft war" between Iran and the West, suggesting that an insidious cultural invasion could undermine the theocracy. The Guards and the Basij, or volunteer militia, have been trained to combat such influences, seeking to filter them from the media and Internet.

Officials saw the opposition Green Movement that blossomed in 2009 as just such a threat, portraying young opponents of the government as tools of the United States. Likewise, Iranian leaders today see an American hand behind some developments in the Arab Spring, particularly the undermining of Iran's allies in Syria. The rivalry between Saudi Arabia, the Sunni Arab power in the region, and Iran, the Persian bastion of Shiite Islam, is an old story, but some of the American diplomatic cables obtained by WikiLeaks showed Saudi hostility in especially raw form. In a now-famous 2008 cable from Riyadh, the Saudi ambassador to the United States, Adel al-Jubeir, reminded the Americans that King Abdullah, the Saudi monarch, had urged the United States to attack Iran and destroy its nuclear program.

"He told you to cut off the head of the snake," Mr. Jubeir is quoted as saying.

Whether that statement put him in Iran's sights in the plot revealed this week is uncertain. The Washington Post reported Friday that Iran's Quds Force is believed by American and Saudi intelligence to be behind the killing in May of a Saudi diplomat in Karachi, Pakistan.

But plotting the murder of a Saudi diplomat on American soil would be an act aimed at the United States as much as at Saudi Arabia, said Reza Aslan, an Iran expert at the University of California, Riverside.

Mr. Gerecht said he was inclined to accept the administration's account of the Washington murder plot, which he sees as a bold escalation of hostilities in the covert conflict. "The only thing that has kept the Iranians from hitting in the United States is the fear that it will rouse the beast," he said. "If the Justice Department is right about this plot, that's very bad news."

Credit: SCOTT SHANE and ARTIN AFKHAMI; Scott Shane reported from Washington, and Artin Afkhami from Boston.

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Israel Tests Called Crucial In Iran Nuclear Setback

WILLIAM J. BROAD, JOHN MARKOFF and DAVID E. SANGER . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]16 Jan 2011: A.1.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The Dimona complex in the Negev desert is famous as the heavily guarded heart of Israel's never-acknowledged nuclear arms program, where neat rows of factories make atomic fuel for the arsenal. In early 2008 the German company Siemens cooperated with one of the United States' premier national laboratories, in Idaho, to identify the vulnerabilities of computer controllers that the company sells to operate industrial machinery around the world -- and that American intelligence agencies have identified as key equipment in Iran's enrichment facilities.

FULL TEXT

CORRECTION APPENDED

The Dimona complex in the Negev desert is famous as the heavily guarded heart of Israel's never-acknowledged nuclear arms program, where neat rows of factories make atomic fuel for the arsenal.

Over the past two years, according to intelligence and military experts familiar with its operations, Dimona has taken on a new, equally secret role -- as a critical testing ground in a joint American and Israeli effort to undermine Iran's efforts to make a bomb of its own.

Behind Dimona's barbed wire, the experts say, Israel has spun nuclear centrifuges virtually identical to Iran's at Natanz, where Iranian scientists are struggling to enrich uranium. They say Dimona tested the effectiveness of the Stuxnet computer worm, a destructive program that appears to have wiped out roughly a fifth of Iran's nuclear centrifuges and helped delay, though not destroy, Tehran's ability to make its first nuclear arms.

"To check out the worm, you have to know the machines," said an American expert on nuclear intelligence. "The reason the worm has been effective is that the Israelis tried it out."

Though American and Israeli officials refuse to talk publicly about what goes on at Dimona, the operations there, as well as related efforts in the United States, are among the newest and strongest clues suggesting that the virus was designed as an American-Israeli project to sabotage the Iranian program.

In recent days, the retiring chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, Meir Dagan, and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton separately announced that they believed Iran's efforts had been set back by several years. Mrs. Clinton cited American-led sanctions, which have hurt Iran's ability to buy components and do business around the world.

The gruff Mr. Dagan, whose organization has been accused by Iran of being behind the deaths of several Iranian

scientists, told the Israeli Knesset in recent days that Iran had run into technological difficulties that could delay a bomb until 2015. That represented a sharp reversal from Israel's long-held argument that Iran was on the cusp of success.

The biggest single factor in putting time on the nuclear clock appears to be Stuxnet, the most sophisticated cyberweapon ever deployed.

In interviews over the past three months in the United States and Europe, experts who have picked apart the computer worm describe it as far more complex – and ingenious – than anything they had imagined when it began circulating around the world, unexplained, in mid-2009.

Many mysteries remain, chief among them, exactly who constructed a computer worm that appears to have several authors on several continents. But the digital trail is littered with intriguing bits of evidence.

In early 2008 the German company Siemens cooperated with one of the United States' premier national laboratories, in Idaho, to identify the vulnerabilities of computer controllers that the company sells to operate industrial machinery around the world – and that American intelligence agencies have identified as key equipment in Iran's enrichment facilities.

Siemens says that program was part of routine efforts to secure its products against cyberattacks. Nonetheless, it gave the Idaho National Laboratory – which is part of the Energy Department, responsible for America's nuclear arms – the chance to identify well-hidden holes in the Siemens systems that were exploited the next year by Stuxnet.

The worm itself now appears to have included two major components. One was designed to send Iran's nuclear centrifuges spinning wildly out of control. Another seems right out of the movies: The computer program also secretly recorded what normal operations at the nuclear plant looked like, then played those readings back to plant operators, like a pre-recorded security tape in a bank heist, so that it would appear that everything was operating normally while the centrifuges were actually tearing themselves apart.

The attacks were not fully successful: Some parts of Iran's operations ground to a halt, while others survived, according to the reports of international nuclear inspectors. Nor is it clear the attacks are over: Some experts who have examined the code believe it contains the seeds for yet more versions and assaults.

"It's like a playbook," said Ralph Langner, an independent computer security expert in Hamburg, Germany, who was among the first to decode Stuxnet. "Anyone who looks at it carefully can build something like it." Mr. Langner is among the experts who expressed fear that the attack had legitimized a new form of industrial warfare, one to which the United States is also highly vulnerable.

Officially, neither American nor Israeli officials will even utter the name of the malicious computer program, much less describe any role in designing it.

But Israeli officials grin widely when asked about its effects. Mr. Obama's chief strategist for combating weapons of mass destruction, Gary Samore, sidestepped a Stuxnet question at a recent conference about Iran, but added with a smile: "I'm glad to hear they are having troubles with their centrifuge machines, and the U.S. and its allies are doing everything we can to make it more complicated."

In recent days, American officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity have said in interviews that they believe Iran's setbacks have been underreported. That may explain why Mrs. Clinton provided her public assessment while traveling in the Middle East last week.

By the accounts of a number of computer scientists, nuclear enrichment experts and former officials, the covert race to create Stuxnet was a joint project between the Americans and the Israelis, with some help, knowing or unknowing, from the Germans and the British.

The project's political origins can be found in the last months of the Bush administration. In January 2009, The New York Times reported that Mr. Bush authorized a covert program to undermine the electrical and computer systems around Natanz, Iran's major enrichment center. President Obama, first briefed on the program even before taking office, sped it up, according to officials familiar with the administration's Iran strategy. So did the Israelis, other officials said. Israel has long been seeking a way to cripple Iran's capability without triggering the opprobrium, or the war, that might follow an overt military strike of the kind they conducted against nuclear facilities in Iraq in 1981 and Syria in 2007.

Two years ago, when Israel still thought its only solution was a military one and approached Mr. Bush for the bunker-busting bombs and other equipment it believed it would need for an air attack, its officials told the White House that such a strike would set back Iran's programs by roughly three years. Its request was turned down.

Now, Mr. Dagan's statement suggests that Israel believes it has gained at least that much time, without mounting an attack. So does the Obama administration.

For years, Washington's approach to Tehran's program has been one of attempting "to put time on the clock," a senior administration official said, even while refusing to discuss Stuxnet. "And now, we have a bit more."

Finding Weaknesses

Paranoia helped, as it turns out.

Years before the worm hit Iran, Washington had become deeply worried about the vulnerability of the millions of computers that run everything in the United States from bank transactions to the power grid.

Computers known as controllers run all kinds of industrial machinery. By early 2008, the Department of Homeland Security had teamed up with the Idaho National Laboratory to study a widely used Siemens controller known as P.C.S.-7, for Process Control System 7. Its complex software, called Step 7, can run whole symphonies of industrial instruments, sensors and machines.

The vulnerability of the controller to cyberattack was an open secret. In July 2008, the Idaho lab and Siemens teamed up on a PowerPoint presentation on the controller's vulnerabilities that was made to a conference in Chicago at Navy Pier, a top tourist attraction.

"Goal is for attacker to gain control," the July paper said in describing the many kinds of maneuvers that could exploit system holes. The paper was 62 pages long, including pictures of the controllers as they were examined and tested in Idaho.

In a statement on Friday, the Idaho National Laboratory confirmed that it formed a partnership with Siemens but

said it was one of many with manufacturers to identify cybervulnerabilities. It argued that the report did not detail specific flaws that attackers could exploit. But it also said it could not comment on the laboratory's classified missions, leaving unanswered the question of whether it passed what it learned about the Siemens systems to other parts of the nation's intelligence apparatus.

The presentation at the Chicago conference, which recently disappeared from a Siemens Web site, never discussed specific places where the machines were used.

But Washington knew. The controllers were critical to operations at Natanz, a sprawling enrichment site in the desert. "If you look for the weak links in the system," said one former American official, "this one jumps out."

Controllers, and the electrical regulators they run, became a focus of sanctions efforts. The trove of State Department cables made public by WikiLeaks describes urgent efforts in April 2009 to stop a shipment of Siemens controllers, contained in 111 boxes at the port of Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. They were headed for Iran, one cable said, and were meant to control "uranium enrichment cascades" -- the term for groups of spinning centrifuges.

Subsequent cables showed that the United Arab Emirates blocked the transfer of the Siemens computers across the Strait of Hormuz to Bandar Abbas, a major Iranian port.

Only months later, in June, Stuxnet began to pop up around the globe. The Symantec Corporation, a maker of computer security software and services based in Silicon Valley, snared it in a global malware collection system. The worm hit primarily inside Iran, Symantec reported, but also in time appeared in India, Indonesia and other countries.

But unlike most malware, it seemed to be doing little harm. It did not slow computer networks or wreak general havoc.

That deepened the mystery.

A 'Dual Warhead'

No one was more intrigued than Mr. Langner, a former psychologist who runs a small computer security company in a suburb of Hamburg. Eager to design protective software for his clients, he had his five employees focus on picking apart the code and running it on the series of Siemens controllers neatly stacked in racks, their lights blinking.

He quickly discovered that the worm only kicked into gear when it detected the presence of a specific configuration of controllers, running a set of processes that appear to exist only in a centrifuge plant. "The attackers took great care to make sure that only their designated targets were hit," he said. "It was a marksman's job."

For example, one small section of the code appears designed to send commands to 984 machines linked together.

Curiously, when international inspectors visited Natanz in late 2009, they found that the Iranians had taken out of service a total of exactly 984 machines that had been running the previous summer.

But as Mr. Langner kept peeling back the layers, he found more – what he calls the "dual warhead." One part of the program is designed to lie dormant for long periods, then speed up the machines so that the spinning rotors in the centrifuges wobble and then destroy themselves. Another part, called a "man in the middle" in the computer world, sends out those false sensor signals to make the system believe everything is running smoothly. That prevents a safety system from kicking in, which would shut down the plant before it could self-destruct.

"Code analysis makes it clear that Stuxnet is not about sending a message or proving a concept," Mr. Langner later wrote. "It is about destroying its targets with utmost determination in military style."

This was not the work of hackers, he quickly concluded. It had to be the work of someone who knew his way around the specific quirks of the Siemens controllers and had an intimate understanding of exactly how the Iranians had designed their enrichment operations.

In fact, the Americans and the Israelis had a pretty good idea.

Testing the Worm

Perhaps the most secretive part of the Stuxnet story centers on how the theory of cyberdestruction was tested on enrichment machines to make sure the malicious software did its intended job.

The account starts in the Netherlands. In the 1970s, the Dutch designed a tall, thin machine for enriching uranium. As is well known, A. Q. Khan, a Pakistani metallurgist working for the Dutch, stole the design and in 1976 fled to Pakistan.

The resulting machine, known as the P-1, for Pakistan's first-generation centrifuge, helped the country get the bomb. And when Dr. Khan later founded an atomic black market, he illegally sold P-1's to Iran, Libya, and North Korea.

The P-1 is more than six feet tall. Inside, a rotor of aluminum spins uranium gas to blinding speeds, slowly concentrating the rare part of the uranium that can fuel reactors and bombs.

How and when Israel obtained this kind of first-generation centrifuge remains unclear, whether from Europe, or the Khan network, or by other means. But nuclear experts agree that Dimona came to hold row upon row of spinning centrifuges.

"They've long been an important part of the complex," said Avner Cohen, author of "The Worst-Kept Secret" (2010), a book about the Israeli bomb program, and a senior fellow at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. He added that Israeli intelligence had asked retired senior Dimona personnel to help on the Iranian issue, and that some apparently came from the enrichment program.

"I have no specific knowledge," Dr. Cohen said of Israel and the Stuxnet worm. "But I see a strong Israeli signature and think that the centrifuge knowledge was critical."

Another clue involves the United States. It obtained a cache of P-1's after Libya gave up its nuclear program in late 2003, and the machines were sent to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, another arm of the Energy Department.

By early 2004, a variety of federal and private nuclear experts assembled by the Central Intelligence Agency were calling for the United States to build a secret plant where scientists could set up the P-1's and study their vulnerabilities. "The notion of a test bed was really pushed," a participant at the C.I.A. meeting recalled.

The resulting plant, nuclear experts said last week, may also have played a role in Stuxnet testing.

But the United States and its allies ran into the same problem the Iranians have grappled with: the P-1 is a balky, badly designed machine. When the Tennessee laboratory shipped some of its P-1's to England, in hopes of working with the British on a program of general P-1 testing, they stumbled, according to nuclear experts.

"They failed hopelessly," one recalled, saying that the machines proved too crude and temperamental to spin properly.

Dr. Cohen said his sources told him that Israel succeeded -- with great difficulty -- in mastering the centrifuge technology. And the American expert in nuclear intelligence, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the Israelis used machines of the P-1 style to test the effectiveness of Stuxnet.

The expert added that Israel worked in collaboration with the United States in targeting Iran, but that Washington was eager for "plausible deniability."

In November, the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, broke the country's silence about the worm's impact on its enrichment program, saying a cyberattack had caused "minor problems with some of our centrifuges." Fortunately, he added, "our experts discovered it."

The most detailed portrait of the damage comes from the Institute for Science and International Security, a private group in Washington. Last month, it issued a lengthy Stuxnet report that said Iran's P-1 machines at Natanz suffered a series of failures in mid- to late 2009 that culminated in technicians taking 984 machines out of action.

The report called the failures "a major problem" and identified Stuxnet as the likely culprit.

Stuxnet is not the only blow to Iran. Sanctions have hurt its effort to build more advanced (and less temperamental) centrifuges. And last January, and again in November, two scientists who were believed to be central to the nuclear program were killed in Tehran.

The man widely believed to be responsible for much of Iran's program, Mohsen Fakrizadeh, a college professor, has been hidden away by the Iranians, who know he is high on the target list.

Publicly, Israeli officials make no explicit ties between Stuxnet and Iran's problems. But in recent weeks, they have given revised and surprisingly upbeat assessments of Tehran's nuclear status.

"A number of technological challenges and difficulties" have beset Iran's program, Moshe Yaalon, Israel's minister of strategic affairs, told Israeli public radio late last month.

The troubles, he added, "have postponed the timetable."

Online Correction: January 17, 2011, Monday

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction: An earlier version of this story misspelled, at one point, the name of the German company whose computer controller systems were exploited by the Stuxnet computer worm. It is Siemens, not Seimens.

Photograph

Codebreaker: Ralph Langner, an Independent Computer Security Expert, Solved Stuxnet. (Photograph by Nicholas Roberts for the New York Times); Testing a Worm: The Dimona Complex in Southern Israel Contains a Centrifuge Plant That Intelligence and Military Experts Say Helped Develop the Stuxnet Worm. (Satellite Image Via Google Earth); Before Stuxnet: President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran Toured the Natanz Plant in 2008. (A16) GRAPHICS: How Stuxnet Spreads: Experts who have disassembled the code of the Stuxnet worm say it was designed to target a specific configuration of computers and industrial controllers, likely those of the Natanz nuclear facility in Iran. (Source: Symantec) (A16)

DETAILS

Subject:	Nuclear tests; Nuclear weapons; Computer viruses
Location:	United States--US Israel Iran
Publication title:	New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y.
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Source type:	Newspapers
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LINKS

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Document 13 of 19

Israeli Ex-Spy Predicts Delay For Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Kershner, Isabel . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]08 Jan 2011: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

Top American military officials said last April that Iran could produce bomb-grade fuel for at least one nuclear weapon within a year, but would most likely need two to five years to manufacture a workable atomic bomb.

FULL TEXT

JERUSALEM – Israel's departing intelligence chief said he believes Iran will not be able to build a nuclear weapon before 2015 at the earliest, Israeli news media reported Friday, in a revised and surprisingly upbeat assessment of Tehran's nuclear capabilities.

The new assessment could reduce international fears of a confrontation over Iran's nuclear program, at least temporarily. Israel has warned that it might launch airstrikes on Iran's nuclear enrichment sites, and many fear that Tehran's retaliation could set off a regional war.

The assessment, which pushed back other Israeli estimates by a year or more, was based on the obstacles Iran has faced, including technical difficulties and covert action against its nuclear program by intelligence agencies, the Israeli news reports said.

Iran has long maintained that its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes, but Israeli, American and European officials believe it is intended to produce nuclear weapons. Last year, the United Nations, the United States and the European Union approved a tough new round of economic sanctions on Iran after diplomatic efforts to contain Iran's nuclear program failed.

Two of Israel's major newspapers, Yediot Aharonot and Maariv, gave prominent coverage to the retirement of the

intelligence chief, Meir Dagan, in their Friday editions, highlighting his achievements on the Iranian front after eight years as director of Mossad, Israel's intelligence service.

Iran's nuclear program is believed to have suffered numerous setbacks recently, but any Israeli role in those problems is not publicly known.

One of Iran's top nuclear scientists was killed and another wounded in late November when assailants on motorcycles attached bombs to the sides of their cars in Tehran. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accused Western governments and Israel of being behind the attacks.

Part of the Iranian nuclear program was said to have been corrupted by the Stuxnet computer worm, a damaging computer program believed to have been created by a foreign government. The United States also has a covert program to undermine Iran's nuclear program.

Israeli predictions for Iran's ability to make a nuclear bomb, which Israel considers an existential threat, have gradually lengthened in recent years.

In the early 2000s, Israeli intelligence branches spoke of Iran's making a bomb before the end of the decade. As recently as 2009, Israel's defense minister, Ehud Barak, said he thought Iran could do it by 2011. Last month, Moshe Yaalon, Israel's minister of strategic affairs, said he believed Iran was at least three years away from a nuclear bomb.

About a year ago, Mr. Dagan told a parliamentary committee that Iran would not have the ability to fire a nuclear missile until 2014, Yediot Aharonot reported. He is said to have based his latest estimate on an assumption that no further preventive actions are taken.

Top American military officials said last April that Iran could produce bomb-grade fuel for at least one nuclear weapon within a year, but would most likely need two to five years to manufacture a workable atomic bomb.

Credit: ISABEL KERSHNER; Robert F. Worth contributed reporting from Washington.

DETAILS

Subject:	Nuclear weapons; Arms control & disarmament; International relations
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People:	Dagan, Meir
Publication title:	New York Times, Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y.
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Language of publication:	English
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Database:	Global Newsstream,U.S. Newsstream,ProQuest Central

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Document 14 of 19

Iran Nuclear Capability Seen as Delayed

The Associated Press . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]30 Dec 2010: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Israel's minister of strategic affairs said Wednesday that recent technical difficulties in Iran had pushed back assessments of how quickly the country could produce a nuclear weapon. The minister, Moshe Yaalon, whose portfolio includes monitoring Iran, said he believed that Iran was at least three years away from developing a nuclear bomb. That is the outer range of past Israeli estimates, which had said Iran was anywhere from one to three years away from developing a weapon. Iran denies such intentions. Mr. Yaalon did not say how he had reached his latest assessment. In recent months, an Iranian nuclear scientist has been killed in a bomb attack and

a destructive computer worm has struck Iran's uranium enrichment program.

DETAILS

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Publication date:	Dec 30, 2010
column:	World Briefing Middle East
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ProQuest document ID:	821582790
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Iran: Arrests in Attacks on Nuclear Scientists

Worth, Robert F . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]03 Dec 2010: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

FULL TEXT

Some perpetrators of the recent bomb attacks on two of the country's top nuclear scientists have been arrested, Iranian news media reported Thursday. Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi said the spy agencies of Israel, the United States and Britain played roles in the attack on Monday, which left one scientist dead and the other wounded, according to Iran's state-run Press TV.

DETAILS

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WORLD BRIEFING MIDDLE EAST; Iran: Date Set for Nuclear Talks With European Union

WILLIAM YONG and J. DAVID GOODMAN . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]01 Dec 2010: A.8.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The meeting between Saeed Jalili, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, and Catherine Ashton, the European Union's foreign policy chief, would be the first high-level negotiations in more than a year and would follow revelations, in leaked diplomatic communications, of widespread concern among Iran's Arab neighbors about the nation's nuclear program.

FULL TEXT

TEHRAN -- Iran and the European Union agreed Tuesday on a date for nuclear talks in Geneva next week, but President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad insisted in a speech that Iran would not give "one iota" in the discussions.

The meeting between Saeed Jalili, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, and Catherine Ashton, the European Union's foreign policy chief, would be the first high-level negotiations in more than a year and would follow revelations, in leaked diplomatic communications, of widespread concern among Iran's Arab neighbors about the nation's nuclear program.

The agreement on when to hold the meeting came a day after the killing of an Iranian nuclear scientist in Tehran.

Speaking to a crowd of supporters in northern Iran on Tuesday, Mr. Ahmadinejad took a hard stance ahead of the talks. Iran had always been willing to talk "under the conditions of justice and respect," he said, but added that "the

people of Iran will not back down one iota" on demands to curb the nation's nuclear program, which Iran claims is directed only at nonmilitary purposes.

Mr. Ahmadinejad appeared to frame the Geneva meeting, scheduled for Dec. 6 and 7, in terms of the economic sanctions imposed by the Western powers. "I advise that if they want to get results from these talks, they must put aside their outdated behavior" in order to talk "about international cooperation, solving the problems of humanity and about economic and nuclear issues," he said in a speech that was broadcast on state television.

In the view of American and European officials, the new willingness by Iran to engage in talks may indicate that new and tougher sanctions, approved this year, are having an effect on its troubled economy.

Officials from the United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Britain are expected to attend the meeting, although Ms. Ashton said she would negotiate with Iran "on behalf" of those six nations, her office said in a statement confirming the meeting. On Monday, attackers riding motorcycles killed one prominent Iranian nuclear scientist and wounded another in separate bombings in Tehran. The scientist who survived, Fereydoon Abbasi, is on the United Nations Security Council's sanctions list for ties to the nuclear effort, and the highly targeted nature of the attacks led to accusations of a renewed effort by the United States and Israel to disrupt Iran's program. In diplomatic cables revealed by the Web site WikiLeaks on Sunday, Arab allies of the United States, including King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, candidly voiced concerns over the leadership of Mr. Ahmadinejad and Iran's path on nuclear weapons.

Credit: WILLIAM YONG and J. DAVID GOODMAN; William Yong reported from Tehran, and J. David Goodman from New York. Stephen Castle contributed reporting from Brussels.

Photograph

Photo

DETAILS

Subject:	Meetings; International relations
Location:	Iran
People:	Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud Jalili, Saeed
Company / organization:	Name: European Union; NAICS: 926110, 928120
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Document 17 of 19

Bombings Hit Atomic Experts In Iran Streets

WILLIAM YONG and ROBERT F. WORTH . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]30 Nov 2010: A.1.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

Unidentified assailants riding motorcycles carried out separate bomb attacks here on Monday against two of the country's top nuclear scientists, killing one and prompting accusations that the United States and Israel were again trying to disrupt Iran's nuclear program. Neither has acknowledged pursuing sabotage or assassinations there, but both are widely believed to be pursuing ways to undermine the country's nuclear program short of bombing reactor sites, including damaging the centrifuges to slow down the production of enriched uranium.

FULL TEXT

TEHRAN – Unidentified assailants riding motorcycles carried out separate bomb attacks here on Monday against two of the country's top nuclear scientists, killing one and prompting accusations that the United States and Israel were again trying to disrupt Iran's nuclear program.

The slain scientist, Majid Shahriari, managed a "major project" for the country's Atomic Energy Organization, Iran's nuclear chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, told the semiofficial IRNA news agency. His wounded colleague, Fereydoon Abbasi, is believed to be even more important; he is on the United Nations Security Council's sanctions list for ties to the Iranian nuclear effort.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that "undoubtedly the hand of the Zionist regime and Western governments is involved" in the attacks. He also publicly acknowledged, apparently for the first time, that the country's nuclear program had been disrupted recently by malicious computer software that attacked its centrifuges.

The two scientists are among the most prominent in the Iranian nuclear world, and the brazen daylight attacks on them seemed certain to worsen tensions over the country's controversial uranium enrichment efforts.

Israel and the United States have often signaled that they will not tolerate a nuclear Iran. Neither has acknowledged pursuing sabotage or assassinations there, but both are widely believed to be pursuing ways to undermine the country's nuclear program short of bombing reactor sites, including damaging the centrifuges to slow down the production of enriched uranium.

"They're bad people, and the work they do is exactly what you need to design a bomb," said a federal official who assesses scientific intelligence and spoke on condition of anonymity. "They're both top scientists."

Philip J. Crowley, the State Department spokesman, did not address the Iranian accusations in detail. "All I can say is we decry acts of terrorism wherever they occur and beyond that, we do not have any information on what happened," he said.

Diplomatic efforts to stop the Iranian nuclear program appear to have failed, and this year, the United Nations and Western powers imposed a new, tougher round of sanctions. On Oct. 29, Iran said it was willing to resume talks with the European Union over its nuclear program, a step that American officials view as a sign that the sanctions were having an effect on Iran's troubled economy. Iran has delayed a major economic reform package, apparently concerned about possible unrest if prices for basic goods rise further.

Dr. Shahriari published dozens of esoteric conference reports and peer-reviewed articles on nuclear research, at least five of which list Mr. Salehi, the Iranian nuclear agency chief, as a co-author. He was an expert on neutron transport, a field that lies at the heart of nuclear chain reactions in bombs and reactors. Some Iranian media reports said he taught at the Supreme National Defense University, which is run by the Iranian Army.

The United Nations describes Dr. Abbasi as a senior scientist in the Ministry of Defense "working closely" with Mohsen Fakhrazadeh, an officer in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps whom Western intelligence considers a leader in Tehran's effort to acquire a nuclear warhead. The federal analyst said that Dr. Abbasi was more deeply entwined with secretive aspects of the Iranian effort than was his slain colleague.

"Abbasi is the big one," the analyst said. "He goes way, way back."

Mr. Salehi issued an angry warning to the Western powers and their allies on Monday, saying "the patience of the Iranian people has its limits."

"If our patience runs out," he said, "you will suffer the consequences."

Mr. Ahmadinejad, speaking at a news conference, vowed that the nuclear program would continue, but acknowledged damage from the computer worm. "They succeeded in creating problems for a limited number of

our centrifuges with the software they had installed in electronic parts," he said.

Iranian officials had previously acknowledged unspecified problems with centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium that can be used for peaceful energy generation or atomic weapons. But the Iranians had always denied that the problems were caused by malicious computer code.

A worm known as Stuxnet is believed to have struck Iran over the summer. Experts said that the program, which is precisely calibrated to send nuclear centrifuges wildly out of control, was probably developed by technicians working for a government.

Mr. Ahmadinejad did not specify the type of malicious software or those behind it, but said that "fortunately our experts discovered that, and today they are not able anymore" to damage Iran's centrifuges.

The motorcycle attackers attached the bombs to the professors' cars, then drove off, detonating them from a distance, according to Iranian news media reports. Dr. Abbasi's wife was also hurt, the reports said.

Last January, a remote-controlled bomb killed a physics professor, Massoud Ali Mohammadi, outside his home. The Iranian authorities also blamed that attack on the United States and Israel, a charge the State Department dismissed as absurd.

In 2007, state television said that another nuclear scientist, Ardeshir Hosseinpour, had died of gas poisoning. Both Dr. Mohammadi and Dr. Shahriari were associated with a nonnuclear scientific research unit, based in Jordan and operating under United Nations auspices, known as Sesame, for Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East. Unusually, its nine-member council includes representatives from Israel, along with Iran and other Muslim countries. It was not clear whether the bomb attacks on the two Iranian scientists were linked to their association with the organization.

The latest bombings came a day after leaked State Department documents quoted several Arab leaders as urging the United States to attack Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran says its nuclear program is for civilian purposes only, but many in the West and in Israel maintain that Tehran's aim is to build a nuclear bomb.

Credit: WILLIAM YONG and ROBERT F. WORTH; William Yong reported from Tehran, and Robert F. Worth from Cairo. William J. Broad contributed reporting from New York, and Alan Cowell from Paris.

Photograph

One of the Two Cars Bombed Monday in Tehran. One Iranian Nuclear Scientist Was Killed and Another Was Wounded in the Attacks. (Photograph by Fars News Agency, Via Reuters) (A10)

DETAILS

Subject:	Nuclear weapons; Sanctions; Assassinations & assassination attempts; Bombings; Scientists
Location:	United States--US Israel Iran
People:	Ahmadinejad, Mahmoud
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Last updated:	2017-11-17
Database:	Global Newsstream,U.S. Newsstream,ProQuest Central

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Document 18 of 19

Motorcycle Bomb Kills Iranian Physics Professor

Cowell, Alan . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]13 Jan 2010: A.12.

[ProQuest document link](#)

ABSTRACT

The authorities have already announced plans to try five protesters on a charge of "fighting against God," which carries a death sentence for those who are convicted. Last week, pro-government demonstrators shot at the armored car of Iran's most outspoken opposition leader, Mehdi Karroubi, his Saham News Web site reported.

FULL TEXT

A remote-controlled bomb attached to a motorcycle killed an Iranian physics professor outside his home in north Tehran on Tuesday, state media reported. The reports blamed the United States and Israel for the attack.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility. One state broadcaster, IRIB, quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that "in the initial investigation, signs of the triangle of wickedness by the Zionist regime, America and their hired agents are visible in the terrorist act" against the scientist, Masoud Ali Mohammadi.

A State Department spokesman in Washington dismissed the accusation of United States involvement as "absurd."

Two other people were wounded in the blast, which was powerful enough to shatter the windows in a nearby four-story building, mangle window frames and blow a garage door out of its frame. The BBC Persian service reported that the jolt led neighbors to assume that there had been an earthquake.

The English-language Press TV said Mr. Ali Mohammadi, 50, taught neutron physics at Tehran University, although he did not seem to have any connections to Iran's nuclear enrichment program.

Two Iranian academics, who would speak only anonymously for fear of official reprisals, said in telephone interviews that he had specialized in particle and theoretical physics. The Web site of Tehran University lists him as a professor of elementary particle physics.

A spokesman for Iran's atomic agency, Ali Shirzadian, told The Associated Press that Mr. Ali Mohammadi had no link with the agency responsible for Iran's nuclear program.

While Press TV called the professor a "staunch supporter of the Islamic Revolution" of 1979, that claim seemed dubious.

Ali Moghari, the director of the science department of Tehran University, described Mr. Ali Mohammadi as an "apolitical professor," the semiofficial Mehr news agency reported. "He was a well-known professor but was not politically active," he was quoted as saying.

There were some indications that he might have been taking a more active role in the opposition that sprang up after the flawed presidential election last June. Mr. Ali Mohammadi was among 240 university professors who signed a letter before the election expressing support for the main opposition candidate, Mir Hussein Moussavi.

After a brutal crackdown, the authorities late last year broadened efforts to stifle dissent to encompass the educational system, hinting that dissident professors would be purged. A number of hard-line clerics have called for the university humanities curriculums to be further Islamized. But it was not immediately known whether Tuesday's killing was related to that dispute.

Analysts said the Iranian authorities seemed to have been quick to label Mr. Ali Mohammadi a loyalist, possibly as a precursor to renewed, harsh action against their opponents.

"This is an old trick," said a former senior official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. "They did it themselves but blame it on opposition groups so that they can easily begin issuing death sentences

for protesters. I think this means there could be more violence against the opposition."

The authorities have already announced plans to try five protesters on a charge of "fighting against God," which carries a death sentence for those who are convicted.

Seven leaders of the minority Bahai religious group were tried Tuesday in Tehran in closed proceedings, the Human Rights Activist News Agency, an opposition Web site, reported. The seven, who have been in jail for more than 20 months, were charged with committing religious offenses and trying to disrupt national unity. Recently, Iranian officials have accused Bahai leaders of fomenting the street demonstrations.

Last week, pro-government demonstrators shot at the armored car of Iran's most outspoken opposition leader, Mehdi Karroubi, his Saham News Web site reported.

That attack appeared to reflect growing frustration that the crackdown in recent months had failed to stop the opposition from lashing out at the country's leaders and staging intermittent protests that brought tens of thousands of demonstrators into the streets.

The Web site of Iran's state television declared the bombing a "terrorist act by counterrevolutionaries and elements of arrogance," a reference to the United States. Security forces are investigating, The Associated Press quoted the report as saying.

Last year, an Iranian nuclear scientist, Shahram Amiri, disappeared during a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia; Iran accused the United States of helping to kidnap him.

The United States and its Western allies have been pressing Iran to halt its nuclear enrichment program, which Tehran insists is solely for civilian purposes to produce electricity. But the West fears that Iran is trying to build a nuclear weapon, which would threaten Israel and upset the regional power balance.

Speaking Monday at the start of a nine-day trip across the Pacific, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said the United States and its allies were discussing financial sanctions that would appear to be aimed at Iran's Revolutionary Guards and other political players if diplomacy fails to overcome the growing tensions with Iran.

"It is clear that there is a relatively small group of decision makers inside Iran," she said. "They are in both political and commercial relationships, and if we can create a sanctions track that targets those who actually make the decisions, we think that is a smarter way to do sanctions."

But, she added, "all that is yet to be decided upon."

Credit: ALAN COWELL; Nazila Fathi contributed reporting.

Photograph

The Police at the Scene of a Bomb Blast That Killed a Professor, Masoud Ali Mohammadi, On Tuesday Outside His Home in Tehran. (Photograph by Associated Press)

DETAILS

Subject:	Demonstrations & protests; Capital punishment; Particle physics; Public figures; Suicide bombings
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Location:	United States--US Teheran Iran Iran
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Publication date:	Jan 13, 2010
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Source type:	Newspapers
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Database:	Global Newsstream,U.S. Newsstream,ProQuest Central

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Document 19 of 19

U.S. Rejected Aid For Israeli Raid On Nuclear Site

Sanger, David E . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y]11 Jan 2009: A.1 .

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ABSTRACT

President Bush deflected a secret request by Israel last year for specialized bunker-busting bombs it wanted for an attack on Iran's main nuclear complex and told the Israelis that he had authorized new covert action intended to sabotage Iran's suspected effort to develop nuclear weapons, according to senior American and foreign officials.

FULL TEXT

President Bush deflected a secret request by Israel last year for specialized bunker-busting bombs it wanted for an attack on Iran's main nuclear complex and told the Israelis that he had authorized new covert action intended to sabotage Iran's suspected effort to develop nuclear weapons, according to senior American and foreign officials. White House officials never conclusively determined whether Israel had decided to go ahead with the strike before the United States protested, or whether Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel was trying to goad the White House into more decisive action before Mr. Bush left office. But the Bush administration was particularly alarmed by an Israeli request to fly over Iraq to reach Iran's major nuclear complex at Natanz, where the country's only known uranium enrichment plant is located.

The White House denied that request outright, American officials said, and the Israelis backed off their plans, at least temporarily. But the tense exchanges also prompted the White House to step up intelligence-sharing with Israel and brief Israeli officials on new American efforts to subtly sabotage Iran's nuclear infrastructure, a major covert program that Mr. Bush is about to hand off to President-elect Barack Obama.

This account of the expanded American covert program and the Bush administration's efforts to dissuade Israel from an aerial attack on Iran emerged in interviews over the past 15 months with current and former American officials, outside experts, international nuclear inspectors and European and Israeli officials. None would speak on the record because of the great secrecy surrounding the intelligence developed on Iran.

Several details of the covert effort have been omitted from this account, at the request of senior United States intelligence and administration officials, to avoid harming continuing operations.

The interviews also suggest that while Mr. Bush was extensively briefed on options for an overt American attack on Iran's facilities, he never instructed the Pentagon to move beyond contingency planning, even during the final year of his presidency, contrary to what some critics have suggested.

The interviews also indicate that Mr. Bush was convinced by top administration officials, led by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, that any overt attack on Iran would probably prove ineffective, lead to the expulsion of international inspectors and drive Iran's nuclear effort further out of view. Mr. Bush and his aides also discussed the possibility that an airstrike could ignite a broad Middle East war in which America's 140,000 troops in Iraq would inevitably become involved.

Instead, Mr. Bush embraced more intensive covert operations actions aimed at Iran, the interviews show, having concluded that the sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies were failing to slow the uranium

enrichment efforts. Those covert operations, and the question of whether Israel will settle for something less than a conventional attack on Iran, pose immediate and wrenching decisions for Mr. Obama.

The covert American program, started in early 2008, includes renewed American efforts to penetrate Iran's nuclear supply chain abroad, along with new efforts, some of them experimental, to undermine electrical systems, computer systems and other networks on which Iran relies. It is aimed at delaying the day that Iran can produce the weapons-grade fuel and designs it needs to produce a workable nuclear weapon.

Knowledge of the program has been closely held, yet inside the Bush administration some officials are skeptical about its chances of success, arguing that past efforts to undermine Iran's nuclear program have been detected by the Iranians and have only delayed, not derailed, their drive to unlock the secrets of uranium enrichment.

Late last year, international inspectors estimated that Iran had 3,800 centrifuges spinning, but American intelligence officials now estimate that the figure is 4,000 to 5,000, enough to produce about one weapon's worth of uranium every eight months or so.

While declining to be specific, one American official dismissed the latest covert operations against Iran as "science experiments." One senior intelligence official argued that as Mr. Bush prepared to leave office, the Iranians were already so close to achieving a weapons capacity that they were unlikely to be stopped.

Others disagreed, making the point that the Israelis would not have been dissuaded from conducting an attack if they believed that the American effort was unlikely to prove effective.

Since his election on Nov. 4, Mr. Obama has been extensively briefed on the American actions in Iran, though his transition aides have refused to comment on the issue.

Early in his presidency, Mr. Obama must decide whether the covert actions begun by Mr. Bush are worth the risks of disrupting what he has pledged will be a more active diplomatic effort to engage with Iran.

Either course could carry risks for Mr. Obama. An inherited intelligence or military mission that went wrong could backfire, as happened to President Kennedy with the Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba. But a decision to pull back on operations aimed at Iran could leave Mr. Obama vulnerable to charges that he is allowing Iran to speed ahead toward a nuclear capacity, one that could change the contours of power in the Middle East.

An Intelligence Conflict

Israel's effort to obtain the weapons, refueling capacity and permission to fly over Iraq for an attack on Iran grew out of its disbelief and anger at an American intelligence assessment completed in late 2007 that concluded that Iran had effectively suspended its development of nuclear weapons four years earlier.

That conclusion also stunned Mr. Bush's national security team -- and Mr. Bush himself, who was deeply suspicious of the conclusion, according to officials who discussed it with him.

The assessment, a National Intelligence Estimate, was based on a trove of Iranian reports obtained by penetrating Iran's computer networks.

Those reports indicated that Iranian engineers had been ordered to halt development of a nuclear warhead in 2003, even while they continued to speed ahead in enriching uranium, the most difficult obstacle to building a weapon. The "key judgments" of the National Intelligence Estimate, which were publicly released, emphasized the suspension of the weapons work.

The public version made only glancing reference to evidence described at great length in the 140-page classified version of the assessment: the suspicion that Iran had 10 or 15 other nuclear-related facilities, never opened to international inspectors, where enrichment activity, weapons work or the manufacturing of centrifuges might be taking place.

The Israelis responded angrily and rebutted the American report, providing American intelligence officials and Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with evidence that they said indicated that the

Iranians were still working on a weapon.

While the Americans were not convinced that the Iranian weapons development was continuing, the Israelis were not the only ones highly critical of the United States report. Secretary Gates, a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said the report had presented the evidence poorly, underemphasizing the importance of Iran's enrichment activity and overemphasizing the suspension of a weapons-design effort that could easily be turned back on.

In an interview, Mr. Gates said that in his whole career he had never seen "an N.I.E. that had such an impact on U.S. diplomacy," because "people figured, well, the military option is now off the table."

Prime Minister Olmert came to the same conclusion. He had previously expected, according to several Americans and Israeli officials, that Mr. Bush would deal with Iran's nuclear program before he left office. "Now," said one American official who bore the brunt of Israel's reaction, "they didn't believe he would."

Attack Planning

Early in 2008, the Israeli government signaled that it might be preparing to take matters into its own hands. In a series of meetings, Israeli officials asked Washington for a new generation of powerful bunker-busters, far more capable of blowing up a deep underground plant than anything in Israel's arsenal of conventional weapons. They asked for refueling equipment that would allow their aircraft to reach Iran and return to Israel. And they asked for the right to fly over Iraq.

Mr. Bush deflected the first two requests, pushing the issue off, but "we said 'hell no' to the overflights," one of his top aides said. At the White House and the Pentagon, there was widespread concern that a political uproar in Iraq about the use of its American-controlled airspace could result in the expulsion of American forces from the country.

The Israeli ambassador to the United States, Sallai Meridor, declined several requests over the past four weeks to be interviewed about Israel's efforts to obtain the weapons from Washington, saying through aides that he was too busy.

Last June, the Israelis conducted an exercise over the Mediterranean Sea that appeared to be a dry run for an attack on the enrichment plant at Natanz. When the exercise was analyzed at the Pentagon, officials concluded that the distances flown almost exactly equaled the distance between Israel and the Iranian nuclear site.

"This really spooked a lot of people," one White House official said. White House officials discussed the possibility that the Israelis would fly over Iraq without American permission. In that case, would the American military be ordered to shoot them down? If the United States did not interfere to stop an Israeli attack, would the Bush administration be accused of being complicit in it?

Admiral Mullen, traveling to Israel in early July on a previously scheduled trip, questioned Israeli officials about their intentions. His Israeli counterpart, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, argued that an aerial attack could set Iran's program back by two or three years, according to officials familiar with the exchange. The American estimates at the time were far more conservative.

Yet by the time Admiral Mullen made his visit, Israeli officials appear to have concluded that without American help, they were not yet capable of hitting the site effectively enough to strike a decisive blow against the Iranian program.

The United States did give Israel one item on its shopping list: high-powered radar, called the X-Band, to detect any Iranian missile launchings. It was the only element in the Israeli request that could be used solely for defense, not offense.

Mr. Gates's spokesman, Geoff Morrell, said last week that Mr. Gates – whom Mr. Obama is retaining as defense secretary – believed that "a potential strike on the Iranian facilities is not something that we or anyone else should be pursuing at this time."

A New Covert Push

Throughout 2008, the Bush administration insisted that it had a plan to deal with the Iranians: applying overwhelming financial pressure that would persuade Tehran to abandon its nuclear program, as foreign enterprises like the French company Total pulled out of Iranian oil projects, European banks cut financing, and trade credits were squeezed.

But the Iranians were making uranium faster than the sanctions were making progress. As Mr. Bush realized that the sanctions he had pressed for were inadequate and his military options untenable, he turned to the C.I.A. His hope, several people involved in the program said, was to create some leverage against the Iranians, by setting back their nuclear program while sanctions continued and, more recently, oil prices dropped precipitously. There were two specific objectives: to slow progress at Natanz and other known and suspected nuclear facilities, and keep the pressure on a little-known Iranian professor named Mohsen Fakrizadeh, a scientist described in classified portions of American intelligence reports as deeply involved in an effort to design a nuclear warhead for Iran.

Past American-led efforts aimed at Natanz had yielded little result. Several years ago, foreign intelligence services tinkered with individual power units that Iran bought in Turkey to drive its centrifuges, the floor-to-ceiling silvery tubes that spin at the speed of sound, enriching uranium for use in power stations or, with additional enrichment, nuclear weapons.

A number of centrifuges blew up, prompting public declarations of sabotage by Iranian officials. An engineer in Switzerland, who worked with the Pakistani nuclear black-marketeer Abdul Qadeer Khan, had been "turned" by American intelligence officials and helped them slip faulty technology into parts bought by the Iranians.

What Mr. Bush authorized, and informed a narrow group of Congressional leaders about, was a far broader effort, aimed at the entire industrial infrastructure that supports the Iranian nuclear program. Some of the efforts focused on ways to destabilize the centrifuges. The details are closely held, for obvious reasons, by American officials. One official, however, said, "It was not until the last year that they got really imaginative about what one could do to screw up the system."

Then, he cautioned, "none of these are game-changers," meaning that the efforts would not necessarily cripple the Iranian program. Others in the administration strongly disagree.

In the end, success or failure may come down to how much pressure can be brought to bear on Mr. Fakrizadeh, whom the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate identifies, in its classified sections, as the manager of Project 110 and Project 111. According to a presentation by the chief inspector of the International Atomic Energy Agency, those were the names for two Iranian efforts that appeared to be dedicated to designing a warhead and making it work with an Iranian missile. Iranian officials say the projects are a fiction, made up by the United States. While the international agency readily concedes that the evidence about the two projects remains murky, one of the documents it briefly displayed at a meeting of the agency's member countries in Vienna last year, from Mr. Fakrizadeh's projects, showed the chronology of a missile launching, ending with a warhead exploding about 650 yards above ground – approximately the altitude from which the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was detonated. The exact status of Mr. Fakrizadeh's projects today is unclear. While the National Intelligence Estimate reported that activity on Projects 110 and 111 had been halted, the fear among intelligence agencies is that if the weapons design projects are turned back on, will they know?

Credit: DAVID E. SANGER; David E. Sanger is the chief Washington correspondent for The New York Times. Reporting for this article was developed in the course of research for "The Inheritance: The World Obama Confronts

and the Challenges to American Power," to be published Tuesday by Harmony Books.

Photograph

No Green Light: Above, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Tours the Centrifuges at Iran's Underground Complex at Natanz, a Target of an Expanded American Covert Program. Last Year, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel, Below, Asked President Bush for Bunker-Busting Bombs and Permission to Fly Over Iraq to Attack the Plant; the Requests Were Not Granted. (Photographs From Office of Iranian President (Top); David Silverman/Reuters (Left)) (Pg.A1); Agreeing On the Goal, Differing On the Means: Adm. Mike Mullen, Right, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with His Israeli Counterpart, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi, at the Pentagon Last Summer. Washington Had More Conservative Estimates Than Israel of the Potential Effectiveness of a Possible Overt Attack On the Iranian Nuclear Enrichment Plant at Natanz. (Photograph by Gerald Herbert/Associated Press); a Perceived Nuclear Threat: The Iranian Nuclear Enrichment Plant at Natanz, the Target of a Planned Israeli Airstrike Last Year. (Photograph by Majid Saeedi/Getty Images) (Pg.A12)

MAP: IRAN (pg.A1)

DETAILS

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