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IRAN EXPANDS ATOMIC WORK, DEFYING U.N.: IAEA REPORT

May 23, 2007 Reuters reported: "Iran has not only ignored a U.N. Security Council deadline to stop uranium enrichment activity but expanded it, according to a confidential International Atomic Energy Agency report obtained by Reuters on Wednesday.

Iran's defiance of another 60-day deadline set by the Council when it imposed a second set of sanctions on March 24 will expose Tehran to tougher penalties over its nuclear work, which the West fears is a front for assembling atom bombs.

"Iran has not suspended its enrichment-related activities. Iran has continued with the operation of their pilot fuel enrichment plant and with construction of their (planned industrial underground) enrichment plant," the U.N. nuclear watchdog said in its report. "It has started feeding cascades with UF₆ (uranium gas). Iran has also continued with its heavy water-related projects."



But it said the amount of uranium gas fed into the cascade was far below the 80-90 percent suitable to detonate an atom bomb. Concern about Iran's intentions remain high as it is still evading IAEA investigations into the murky origins and procurement activities of the atomic program and unexplained indications of military involvement, U.N. officials aid.

"Although no commercial amounts of enriched uranium are being produced yet, it is clear their program is advancing," one official said. "..."

ISRAEL LAUNCHES AIR STRIKES ON GAZA AMID NEW TRUCE EFFORT

May 23, 2007 The Voice of America News reported: "Israel has launched fresh air strikes in the Gaza Strip, wounding at least seven Palestinians. As Robert Berger reports from VOA's Jerusalem bureau, the attacks occurred as Palestinian leaders pushed for a new truce.

Israeli aircraft attacked targets of the Islamic militant group Hamas across Gaza including suspected weapons factories and warehouses and other facilities. Now in its second week, the air campaign is aimed at halting Palestinian rocket attacks. More than 150 rockets have fallen on Israel over the past week, leaving the border community of Sderot a virtual ghost town. The rockets keep falling despite the air strikes, but Israeli spokeswoman Miri Eisen says a major ground assault on Gaza is not on the table...

In a bid to end the fighting, moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas traveled from the West Bank to Gaza for talks with Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas. They are trying to restore a Gaza cease-fire with Israel that collapsed last week after a five-month lull in violence.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat says the current fighting is not in the interest of either side. "I don't know to who's interest [is it] to undermine the cease-fire?" asked Erekat. "To who's interest [is it] to push back to the cycle of violence and counter-violence?"

The Palestinians have offered to halt the rocket attacks if Israel would extend the Gaza cease-fire to also include the West Bank. But Israel rejects the proposal on grounds that West Bank raids are necessary to prevent suicide bombings in Israeli cities. Palestinian militants say that leaves them no choice but to keep fighting."

NETHERLANDS KEEN TO CURB EU POWERS IN NEW TREATY

May 23, 2007 The EU Observer reported: "Dutch prime minister Jan-Peter Balkenende has set out his country's position on the new EU treaty, saying it should drop the word "constitution", give a bigger say to national parliaments, set clear limits to EU powers and more precise enlargement criteria.

"We must come up with a mutually acceptable solution that does justice to the concerns which emerged following the Dutch and French referenda," the Dutch leader said in the European Parliament on Wednesday (23 May), referring to the rejection of the old constitution by Dutch and French voters in 2005

The Hague – along with London, Warsaw and Prague – is being labelled as one of the biggest stumbling blocks to salvaging the original constitution treaty, with Mr Balkenende's speech to MEPs reaffirming the idea that Dutch voters would only accept a scaled-down treaty that does not create the image of an EU super-state.

The prime minister sketched out four red lines for the Netherlands on the basis of popular Dutch concerns. He agreed the EU bloc should amend its existing treaties, but said the word "constitution" must go, after it became a major factor in the Dutch "nee" on deeper EU integration.

"The Netherlands is in favour of a more traditional document, in the same vein as the treaties of Amsterdam or Nice," he told MEPs.

On top of the name change, the Hague also wants to alter the substance of the old constitution, so that the new text has stronger limitation on qualified majority voting. The old constitution's extension of qualified majority to new areas was designed to make the bloc more efficient in its decision-making.

"We must recognise that countries are afraid to relinquish their vetoes, afraid that the EU will extend its competences by stealth," Mr Balkenende said.

To further increase domestic control over the EU machinery, the prime minister advocated that national parliaments should have a bigger say when it comes to Brussels' proposals. "If a majority of national parliaments are opposed to a given proposal, there must be consequences," he said.

The fourth Dutch red line - concerning stricter enlargement criteria in the new treaty - also addresses popular Dutch dissatisfaction over the prospect of further extending the EU's borders, with Turkey and seven Western Balkan states all in the queue to get in."..."

IRAN'S SECRET PLAN FOR SUMMER OFFENSIVE TO FORCE US OUT OF IRAQ

May 22, 2007 The Guardian Unlimited reported: "Iran is secretly forging ties with al-Qaida elements and Sunni Arab militias in Iraq in preparation for a summer showdown with coalition forces intended to tip a wavering US Congress into voting for full military withdrawal, US officials say.

"Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq and it's a very dangerous course for them to be following. They are already committing daily acts of war against US and British forces," a senior US official in Baghdad warned. "They [Iran] are behind a lot of high-profile attacks meant to undermine US will and British will, such as the rocket attacks on Basra palace and the Green Zone [in Baghdad]. The attacks are directed by the Revolutionary Guard who are connected right to the top [of the Iranian government]."

The official said US commanders were bracing for a nationwide, Iranian-orchestrated summer offensive, linking al-Qaida and Sunni insurgents to Tehran's Shia militia allies, that Iran hoped would trigger a political mutiny in Washington and a US retreat. "We expect that al-Qaida and Iran will both attempt to increase the propaganda and increase the violence prior to Petraeus's report in September [when the US commander General David Petraeus will report to Congress on President George Bush's controversial, six-month security "surge" of 30,000 troop reinforcements]," the official said.

"Certainly it [the violence] is going to pick up from their side. There is significant latent capability in Iraq, especially Iranian-sponsored capability. They can turn it up whenever they want. You can see that from the pre-positioning that's been going on and the huge stockpiles of Iranian weapons that we've turned up in the last couple of months. The relationships between Iran and groups like al-Qaida are very fluid," the official said...

Iran has maintained close links to Iraq's Shia political parties and militias but has previously eschewed collaboration with al-Qaida and Sunni insurgents.

US officials now say they have firm evidence that Tehran has switched tack as it senses a chance of victory in Iraq. In a parallel development, they say they also have proof that Iran has reversed its previous policy in Afghanistan and is now supporting and supplying the Taliban's campaign against US, British and other Nato forces."..."

RECORD GASOLINE PRICES GREAT NEWS FOR U.S.

May 11, 2007 Miami Herald reported: "House Energy and Commerce Committee member Rep. Bart Stupak, D-Mich., right, and House Judiciary Chairman Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., announced that they are submitting legislation to prevent price gauging at the gas pump.

Hurrah! Great news! When I filled up my car's gas tank yesterday, I paid an all-time record \$3.41 a gallon, and experts are predicting that gasoline prices may soon reach \$4 a gallon. I can't wait! I'm not kidding.



I am more convinced than ever that unless gasoline prices rise above \$4 a gallon, there won't be a nationwide uproar strong enough to force Washington to get serious about reducing the U.S. suicidal dependence on foreign oil. Barring \$4-a-gallon gasoline prices, America will not get serious about reducing toxic emissions and will continue to fund corrupt Middle Eastern kingdoms that deny basic civil rights to women and fund Islamic fundamentalist schools, some of which preach violence against innocent "infidels" in the name of Allah.

And, closer to home, without \$4 a gallon gasoline, Washington will most likely continue filling the pockets of oil-rich oil companies and autocrats.

Venezuela's narcissist-Leninist President Hugo Chávez is a perfect example of U.S. oil-funded radicalism. When he was first elected in 1998 and oil prices were at \$9 a barrel, Chávez was ridiculing critics who speculated that he would become a radical leftist. "Me, a Communist?" he asked reporters.

Today, with oil prices at more than \$62 a barrel, Chávez ends his speeches proclaiming "Socialism or Death!" He claims that the United States is "the cruelest, most terrible, most cynical, most murderous empire that has existed." And he chaperones Iranian Holocaust-denying President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad throughout Latin America ."..."

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