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Time for Action on Iran at IAEA Board of Governors Meeting

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The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in its recent safeguards report on Iran delivered a highly negative report on its efforts to gain access to Iran's Parchin military site and learn about activities that are believed to be related to Iran's development and manufacture of nuclear weapons. The IAEA has reached an impasse with Iran on these nuclear weaponization issues. It is time for the Board of Governors to take up this issue and pass a resolution condemning Iran's actions and sending the issue to the U.N. Security Council for further action.

The IAEA states in the August 30, 2012 [report](#) that due to Iran's failure to provide access to the Parchin military site, suspected of housing a high explosive chamber and support facilities for high explosive tests relating to the development of nuclear weapons, and "extensive activities and resultant changes" seen in satellite imagery, **"the Agency's ability to verify the information on which its concerns are based has been adversely affected and, when the Agency gains access to the location, its ability to conduct effective verification will have been significantly hampered."** On September 10, 2012 IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano [stated](#), "The activities observed further strengthen our assessment that it is necessary to have access to the location at Parchin without further delay in order to obtain the required clarifications."

The IAEA report notes that it observed in satellite imagery from February 2005 to January 2012 "virtually no activity at or near the building housing the containment vessel," but **following its first request for access in February 2012, Iran began undertaking extensive activities leading to visible changes to the site, including extensive ground scraping and removal of buildings.** In its recent report, the IAEA laid out in detail the changes it has viewed at the Parchin complex since February (many of which ISIS also reported in satellite imagery briefs):

A number of satellite images of the location since February 2012 show: large amounts of liquid 'run off' emanating from the building in which the vessel is housed; equipment in open storage immediately outside the building; the removal of external fixtures from the building itself; and the presence of light and heavy vehicles. Satellite imagery shows that, as of May 2012, five other buildings or structures at the location had been demolished, and power lines, fences and all paved roads had been removed. Significant ground scraping and landscaping have been undertaken over an extensive area at and around the location, with new dirt roads established. Satellite images from August 2012 show the containment vessel building shrouded.

Iran is well aware that the IAEA and the rest of the world are watching its activities at Parchin. After the IAEA request for access in February 2012, it may have simply reckoned it could no longer act as if as if nothing happened there and subsequently started extensive sanitization activities aimed at hiding incriminating evidence in the hope that it could mollify any international criticism.

The cleanup activities at Parchin are similar, albeit on a smaller scale, to those Iran undertook in 2004 at the Lavisan-Shian site, which was also linked to [secret military nuclear activities](#). At Lavisan, Iran [removed](#) several buildings and conducted extensive earth scraping before allowing an IAEA visit. But the IAEA did not believe its inspectors could successfully conduct environmental sampling, and so it asked to sample the rubble that Iran had removed from the site. However, Iran refused and the issue faded in importance, partly because the focus then was on the successful effort to expand Iran's suspension of its centrifuge program. This effort had started several months earlier in late 2003, and it was widely perceived as also limiting any Iranian military nuclear effort. Perhaps Iran expected the IAEA and its Board of Governors to act similarly in the case of Parchin, thinking it could outlast any international protests. However, if that is the case, Iran miscalculated.

The IAEA's evidence is far stronger today than in 2004 of an Iranian parallel military nuclear program aimed at developing nuclear weapons. The activities at Parchin are part of this growing and substantial body of evidence.

The IAEA has tried for several years to negotiate an umbrella agreement with Iran aimed at resolving the evidence of Iran's past and possibly on-going work on nuclear weapons and a past parallel military fuel cycle program. This effort has likewise reached an impasse. In response, the IAEA has raised the alarm that its efforts in achieving this agreement are also failing.

The August 2012 IAEA safeguards report states that following somewhat promising May 2012 talks in Vienna and Tehran between the Agency and senior Iranian officials to try to reach an agreement on a "structured approach" for resolving outstanding questions about the military dimensions of its nuclear programs, "...Important differences remain and no agreement could be reached..." The IAEA report states, "Despite the intensified dialogue... efforts to resolve all outstanding substantive issues have achieved no concrete results..." and "agreement on the structured approach has yet to materialize."

Amano [said](#) on September 10, 2012 to the Board: "This is frustrating because, without Iran's full engagement, we will not be able to start the process to resolve all outstanding issues, including those concerning possible military dimensions to its nuclear programme. We consider it essential for Iran to engage with us without further delay on the substance of our concerns."

The IAEA deserves strong Board support and recognition that it has done all that could be done. The Board should pass a resolution condemning Iran's refusal to allow an inspection at Parchin and its stonewalling on achieving an umbrella agreement. Moreover, the resolution should refer this entire set of issues to the U.N. Security Council for further action.