

Satellite Imagery Analysis of Iran's Parchin Military site Question Nuclear Deal



On October 9, 2014, we [posted](#) on the mysterious explosions that occurred at the Parchin Military testing site. The Islamic Republic attributed the blast to an unnamed “foreign intelligence power”. We noted the findings of nuclear watchdog, the Washington, DC –based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) headed by former UN inspector David Albright:

Earlier today, it has been reported that the imagery shows that the damage is consistent with an attack against bunkers and that the locality is adjacent to another installation where work was being conducted that involves controlled detonation of fuses intended to serve as triggers for nuclear devices.

However, it is important to note that there is no evidence of either an attack or nuclear weapon-related activities at this specific site. There may be confusion over alleged high explosive nuclear weapon-related activities at another site at Parchin that occurred prior to 2004.

We commented :

With questions raised about the pending final agreement proposals under discussion in Vienna between

representatives of the P5+1 and Iran, the Parchin military test site blast begs disclosures on what triggered it. Why Iran has denied access to the facility to the IAEA since 2005? It is time for the Senate and House Select Intelligence Committees to hold closed door hearings on Iran's nuclear activities during the year long interim agreement. An agreement that gave the green light for lifting some US and International sanctions. Perhaps, Israel has information on both the incident at Parchin and Iran's nuclear program. Yuval Steinitz, Israeli Minister of Intelligence, revealed before President Rouhani's speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 that he had such information from "reliable sources".



Parchin, Iran Military Testing site 1-31-15

Source: Digital Globe/ISIS

Fast forward to satellite imagery taken on January 31, 2015 that raised more questions about what is going on at Parchin, a site barred by Iran from IAEA inspections. Further, it is excluded from the final P5+1 agreement with a target date of March 24th looming. ISIS recently [published](#) its assessment of new activity at Parchin, noting that the asphaltting was consistent with hiding prior activities, perhaps the explosions that occurred there last October. The ISIS report [concluded](#):

Over the last three years, Iran has substantially modified the Parchin site. Like its actions at the Lavisan site, Iran's more recent modifications at Parchin are probably aimed at concealing past nuclear weapons-related activities from the IAEA and the P5+1, who are in charge of negotiating a long term agreement with Iran. Tehran has a long history of hiding its nuclear facilities and conducting secret, illicit nuclear procurement activities

to outfit its nuclear programs. The removal of key economic and financial sanctions will depend on a variety of factors in a long term agreement, including significant cuts in Iran's centrifuge program. But the lifting of these sanctions also depends on Iran stopping its nuclear-related concealment activities and its illicit nuclear procurements and addressing the IAEA's concerns about past and possibly on-going work on nuclear weapons.

ISIS further commented on the wisdom of the pending final agreement:

Prospects for a comprehensive agreement dim if Iran remains intransigent on Parchin. A deal that does not include Iran addressing the IAEA's concerns about the past and possibly on-going military dimensions of its nuclear program would undermine the verifiability of a long-term agreement, and thus the credibility of a comprehensive deal. Any deal will depend heavily on the adequacy of the verification arrangements. Unless reversed, Iran's consistent and unjustified refusal to address the IAEA's concerns, which require access to Parchin and other military sites, creates a dangerous precedent that makes adequate verification of a long-term agreement impossible, even if Iran ratifies the Additional Protocol. Prior to the finalization of a long-term deal, the IAEA must make significant progress on resolving its concerns about Parchin and other alleged nuclear weapons related activities. Certainly, without such progress, no key economic or financial sanctions on Iran should be lifted.

Patrick Goodenough of *CNS*, writing about these latest ISIS findings and conclusions, [reported](#) the abiding concerns by IAEA director Yukio Amano in a late January 2015 speech in Jakarta:

In addressing the Iran nuclear issue... the Agency needs to clarify issues with possible military dimensions to the satisfaction of member-states.

Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman, Goodenough [recalled](#), had testified before a Senate Foreign Committee Hearing in February 2014 that a final agreement had to address the military activities at sites like Parchin. Couple the latest evidence of Iran evading disclosure of nuclear trigger testing at Parchin, the P5+1 relenting on limiting the number of centrifuges for enrichment and the remarks last Sunday by Ayatollah Khamenei that:

If [the Americans] want a deal, they should cover both generalities and details in a single session, instead of leaving details for later and separating generalities which are vague and leave room for different interpretations.

These remarks by Iran's Supreme Ruler appear to have upended President Obama's representations during last [Friday's White House Joint Press Conference](#) with German Chancellor Merkel. The President [suggested](#) that "issues had narrowed" and that "Iran had complied with enrichment at the 20 percent level". Further, that Israel PM Netanyahu's speech to Congress [could](#) "sour negotiations". Calculations by former IAEA deputy Dr. Olli Heinonen [suggest](#) that proposed centrifuge limits of 9,500 units could enable Iran to achieve nuclear breakout in less than six months of an agreement. This analysis rebuts the Administration's roseate views on a P5+1 final agreement. The *Washington Post* editorial board [opinion](#) published last Sunday, has already effectively deemed what emerges on March 24th, as a bad deal. This mounting evidence bolsters why Congress,

especially Democrats, [should heed](#) similar warnings from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu when he speaks before a Joint Session of Congress on March 3rd.