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AP ASSOCIATED PRESS WIRE

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Iran, UN hold talks on uranium findBy ALI AKBAR DAREINI
Associated Press Writer

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iranian and U.N. nuclear officials began a new round of talks Monday, this time to probe the source of traces of weapons-grade uranium found at a university in Tehran, the official IRNA news agency reported.

It was not clear how or when the weapons-grade uranium contamination was discovered at the Technology Faculty of a state university.

The meeting between the International Atomic Energy Agency delegation and its Iranian hosts comes in the wake of a surprising U.S. intelligence report last week that concluded Iran had stopped its nuclear weapons program in late 2003 and had not resumed it since.

The weapons program is separate from uranium enrichment, which Iran continues to do and which experts say could make it possible for Tehran to still develop a nuclear weapon between 2010 and 2015.

In Washington, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the U.S. and its European allies, Britain, France and Germany, would continue to press Russia and China on the need to boost pressure on Iran to halt its controversial uranium enrichment.

The United States and some of its allies accuse Iran of seeking to build nuclear weapons, but Tehran denies that, saying the uranium enrichment is only geared toward generating electricity, not a nuclear bomb.

Monday's talks also follow an IAEA report last month that stated Iran had been generally truthful about its past uranium enrichment activities. Much of the 10-page report focused on Iran's black-market procurements and past development of uranium enrichment technology.

But the talks in Tehran focused on the university find. It's believed this was the first time the incident was discussed.

The IAEA's mandate obliges it to investigate a country's nuclear activities and probe all suspicious findings, such as the traces at the university in Tehran.

In 2003, the IAEA revealed other incidents where traces of weapons-grade uranium were found elsewhere in the country, but Iran said those traces came from imported equipment that had been contaminated before it was purchased.

IAEA findings in 2005 vindicated Iran, saying the traces of highly enriched uranium were found on centrifuge parts that had entered the country already contaminated and were not a result of Iranian nuclear activities. The centrifuge parts were bought from Pakistan.

The IAEA delegation in Monday talks was headed by Herman Nackartes, head of the watchdog's Safeguard Operations department.

In its November report, the IAEA also said it requested access to documents, individuals and relevant equipment and locations for sample-taking to determine the source of the contamination.

Iran officials taking part in the talks must answer all IAEA questions about how the uranium particles got to the university.

While Iran has responded to many IAEA questions about past nuclear activities such as P-1 and P-2 centrifuges, a technology used to enrich uranium, some issues still remain unresolved, such as the university contamination.

Iran has also met a key IAEA demand and handed over long-sought blueprints on how to mold uranium metal into the shape of warheads, which Tehran said were obtained from black market nuclear dealers.

Iran maintains it would never give up its right under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to enrich uranium and produce nuclear fuel, despite two rounds of U.N. sanctions over its refusal to stop enrichment.

The U.S. is pushing for a new, third round of sanctions. Rice said Monday the U.S. and its allies were "working on finalizing a Security Council resolution ... that could then be sent to the Security Council to be voted sometime in the next several weeks."

"We're continuing on a path," Rice told a [Women's Foreign Policy Group](#) luncheon. "People understand that we have the right approach: try to get Iran to stop the enrichment and reprocessing activities that are allowing them to perfect this method that could lead to this fissile material for a nuclear weapon."



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