Iran’s months-long effort to enrich uranium has allowed the country to produce enough fuel for a nuclear bomb in just 30 days, a panel of experts told the New York Times. The Institute for Science and International Security examines reports published by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The agency has stated that having succeeded in enriching nuclear fuel to 60% purity, the Iranians can now cover the “short-distance” needed to make material for the first bomb “in just one month.” The report states that material for two bombs can be ready in less than three months and for the third one in just two months after that.

In May, the IAEA sent a confidential report to its member states stating that analysis of environmental samples taken near the Natanz nuclear facility showed an enrichment level of even 63%. Under the nuclear deal, broken by former US President Donald Trump, Iran was limited to a minimal amount of uranium, with only 3.67% enrichment capability. At the same time, US officials dispute this short one-month timeline for building the bomb, The Daily reports. However, they acknowledged that it could be only a few months before the first bomb is produced. For his part, Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz warned foreign diplomats four weeks ago that Iran was just two months away from developing the materials required to build a nuclear capability.

Access to the right kind of fuel is only one part of the process, as the Iranians would still have to produce a warhead that could be placed in a missile. This warhead is to be made using uranium metal, which Iran has slowly begun to
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At the same time, the United States is gradually moving closer to rejecting the resumption of the nuclear deal with
Iran, said Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, who was on a working visit to Germany, the Al-Arabiya TV channel
reported.

However, Tehran has an entirely different viewpoint, which was again clearly articulated by Iranian Foreign Ministry
spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, saying: “The negotiations in Vienna are not aimed at producing a new text.” The
Vienna meeting ensures that the United States fully implements the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). If
the United States returns to all of its commitments under the JCPOA and Resolution 2231 in a verified manner, the
Iranian diplomat noted, Iran would agree to the United States participating in the JCPOA.

Even more light was shed on Tehran’s position by Kazem Gharibabadi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations Office to Vienna, in his tough speech at the seasonal meeting of
the IAEA Board of Governors. He stated that "until the sanctions on Iran are not removed, no one should expect
more forbearance from Iran." The Iranian pointed out that the United States initially violated UNSCR 2231 by
unilaterally withdrawing from the JCPOA, adopting the failed “maximum pressure” policy, and re-imposing sanctions
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the violations of the US rendered those parts of the deal void and effectively futile.

It is impossible not to agree with the Iranian representative in Vienna, who stated harshly yet bitterly: “I note with
regret and consternation the statements of some JCPOA participants and European states. It is as if they
misremember that Iran fully complied with its commitments under the deal even though, due to the US outlaw
behavior and actions and EU’s miserable negligence, it was not and still is not benefiting from it. Apparently, they
intend to displace the victim with the outlaw perpetrator. It is regrettable that European states are still unwilling to
condemn the illegal unilateral withdrawal of US and re-imposition of its sanctions, which are the sole cause of all
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produce, and according to the IAEA, 200 grams of the substance was produced by mid-August. Unlike uranium
metal, banned under the nuclear deal and from which it will be recalled, the US withdrew, dramatically escalating
the situation in the region. Research on missile technology has never been banned and continues in the Islamic
Republic. Despite all these activities, the Ayatollahs insist that there is a solid religious ban on nuclear weapons
production and that their work is civilian, not military. Nevertheless, Tehran has not allowed the IAEA inspections of
its nuclear facilities for months and has refused to respond to questions regarding suspicious unregistered nuclear
facilities in the country.

Nevertheless, Iran seeks, where possible, to abide by the rules of the nuclear deal. The IAEA Director General Rafael
Grossi has just agreed that the UN agency can replace the memory cards in the cameras it has installed at various
centers of the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program. Inspectors will also be able to service broken cameras, some of
which were damaged during a sabotage operation at the Karaj nuclear facility attributed to Israel in June. While the
cameras could have shown whether Iran has violated or will continue to violate the terms of the nuclear deal, Grossi
instead allowed them to be jointly stamped and made a promise that he would not review their contents. He insisted
that the move remains beneficial, even though it keeps the IAEA in the dark about Iran’s progress in building the
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The European signatory countries under Washington’s firm control will not condemn or criticize Tehran at IAEA
board sessions in exchange for these so-called Iranian concessions. It is believed that such condemnations would
jeopardize negotiations between Iran and the United States, which are allegedly about to return to discussing the
terms of the nuclear deal and its strict limits on uranium enrichment. The negotiations, as we know, stalled in June
after six inconclusive rounds, and the Biden administration officials have provocatively made it clear that their
patience with continuing these talks in Vienna “has a limit.”

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meetings are scheduled with representatives of the United States. “We have not made any direct plans for bilateral

meetings while they are here, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t see the value in having discussions with the Iranians because we do want to move forward on issues related to the JCPOA,” said US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield. But indirect diplomacy is expected as Americans and Europeans will see a new Iranian team.

Light on the prospect of resuming talks was shed by Hossein Amir Abdollahian, who suggested that talks in Vienna will not resume for two to three months, although some observers expect talks earlier. It remains unclear whether Tehran will adhere to the same red lines as in June or whether it will tighten its stance even further. Ali Vaez, International Crisis Group’s Iran Project Director, believes that “The US is very close to its bottom line. I don’t think there’s much more maneuvering space left for the Biden administration.” And so if the Iranians are trying to “drive a harder bargain, it’s basically a formula for deadlock” for negotiations and US-Iranian relations, the international expert, stated.

Quite understandably, the longer the delay in negotiations, the closer observers believe Iran will be able to build a nuclear bomb if it so desires. It is believed that if the problems with the IAEA are not fully resolved by November, and talks in Vienna are not resumed; the Iranian nuclear issue could escalate into a full-blown crisis that would mean the final funeral bell for the 2015 deal.

Viktor Mikhin, corresponding member of RANS, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”. 