

IAEA says Iran increased stock piles of nuclear materials

Fri, 2019-05-31 17:01

VIENNA: Iran's stockpiles of low-enriched uranium and heavy water have increased since the start of the year, the UN atomic watchdog said Friday.

The confidential quarterly report by the International Atomic Energy Agency is the first since Tehran announced it had increased low-enriched uranium production.

While the report said Iran is still within the limitations set by the nuclear deal reached in 2015 with major powers, it detailed significant increases in key nuclear materials.

As of May 26, Iran had 125.2 metric tonnes of heavy water, an increase of 0.4 tonnes on February but still under the 130-tonne limit.

As of May 20, Iran had 174.1 kg of enriched uranium, up from 163.8kg in February but within the relevant of limit 300kg.

The report does say that "technical discussions... are ongoing" with Iran in relation to its installation of up to 33 advanced IR-6 centrifuges, but does not specify the content of these discussions.

Earlier this month Iran announced it was suspending some of its commitments under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and gave the remaining signatories 60 days to come up with new economic incentives to compensate for the unilateral withdrawal of the United States last year.

*With AP and AFP



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Iran increases low enriched uranium production fourfoldIran threatens uranium enrichment, suspend 'some' nuclear deal commitments

[Houthis an 'arm of Iran that threatens Yemen's existence'](#)

Fri, 2019-05-31 16:30

MAKKAH: The Houthis are an arm of Iran and aim to threaten the existence of Yemen and neighboring countries, the Arab coalition said on Friday.

Speaking at a joint press conference organized on the sidelines of the Gulf, Arab and Islamic summits in Makkah, coalition spokesman Col. Turki Al-Maliki said that Iran was seeking to find a foothold in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait

through Yemen.

He added that Iranian intervention was a clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions, and that the “stability of the region” depended on the stability of Yemen.

Al-Maliki added that Houthi missiles were supplied by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, and Iranian experts were training the militias.

“Houthi militias planned a coup against Yemen and planned to threaten the Kingdom and the Gulf nations’ security, and our military operations are recognized by the international community,” he said.

“The current situation and the international and regional political events prove the interrelationship between regimes practicing terrorism and the terrorist groups and militias, especially in the Middle East.”

About the military objectives, Al-Maliki said they were to protect Yemeni citizens in cities and villages, as well as to destroy the militia’s capabilities and return legitimacy to the Yemeni state.

He added that a comprehensive plan for humanitarian operations in Yemen was being prepared, in addition to financial support worth \$1.5 billion.

The Facts in Minutes

An exhibition held on the premises of Jeddah’s King Abdul Aziz International Airport showcased missiles, unarmed aerial vehicles (UAVs), boats and other equipment used by the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen to target Saudi Arabia. Leaders of delegations from 56 different states participating in the Gulf, Arab and Islamic summits have had a look at models of the Iranian ballistic missiles, equipment and weapons used by the Iranian-backed Houthis militias to target Saudi Arabia, where the number of missiles that targeted the Kingdom has reached more than 225 ballistic missiles, including one that targeted Makkah.

The two ballistic missiles featured at the exhibition were intercepted in an attempt targeting Makkah in 2017 and another one targeting Riyadh in 2018.

The “Facts in Minutes” exhibition also features models of ballistic Qiyam missiles, remote-controlled boats, Iranian-made optical binoculars and Iranian Dahlawi anti-armor weaponry used by Houthi militiamen.

The exhibition included a TV screen showing physical evidence of the Iranian regime’s involvement in providing these arms to the Houthis.

The exhibition was organized by the Saudi defense and foreign ministries, as well as the Yemen Development and Reconstruction Center.

Al-Maliki briefed the leaders participating in the three summits on the details of the Iranian regime’s involvement with and support to the terrorist Houthi militias.



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Expo shows evidence of Iranian military backing for HouthisCoalition starts an operation against Houthis in Al-Dhale

Exxon's foreign staff to return to Iraqi oilfield with extra security

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Fri, 2019-05-31 11:25

BASRA: Exxon Mobil employees will start returning to Iraq's West Qurna 1 oilfield on Sunday after the government agreed to provide extra security, two senior Iraqi oil officials told Reuters on Friday.

Senior company management and essential engineers would be among the first employees to return, the Iraqi officials said, two weeks after Exxon pulled its 60 or so foreign staff from the oilfield and flew them to Dubai.

The evacuation came just days after the United States withdrew non-essential staff from its embassy in Baghdad, citing a threat from neighboring Iran.

Exxon asked for extra security from the police and army at work sites and residences and Iraq agreed, the officials said. The company has received letters of assurance from the Iraqi oil ministry and Basra Oil Company.

Iraqi Oil Minister Thamer Ghadhban at the time called the evacuation "unacceptable and unjustified," saying it was a political move, rather than borne out of genuine security concerns. He said he had sent a letter to Exxon Mobil after the staff left asking for the company to immediately return to work at the southern oilfield.

Exxon Mobil is the lead contractor in a long-term deal with Iraq's South Oil Company to develop and rehabilitate the oil field and increase production. Production was not affected by the evacuation and work continued normally, overseen by Iraqi engineers, Iraqi officials said at the time. Production remained at 440,000 barrels per day (bpd) and Iraqi officials later said they would increase it to 490,000 bpd shortly.



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Exxon Mobil evacuates foreign staff out of Iraqi oilfield

[Pompeo says Iran attacked oil tankers to raise global oil price](#)

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Fri, 2019-05-31 01:02

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday blamed Iran for attacks this month on oil tankers in the Gulf, saying it was an effort by Tehran to raise the global price of oil.

"These were efforts by the Iranians to raise the price of crude oil throughout the world," Pompeo told reporters shortly before leaving for a

trip to Europe.

Earlier, White House National Security Adviser John Bolton said evidence that Iran was behind the attacks would be presented to the United Nations Security Council next week.



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Saudi Arabia calls on Islamic nations to reject Iran's 'interference'

[Turkey frees US scientist but tensions remain](#)

Author:

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Thu, 2019-05-30 21:59

WASHINGTON: Turkey on Wednesday released a NASA scientist with dual US-Turkish citizenship whose nearly three-year detention had soured relations, but the NATO allies remained divided over issues including Ankara's purchase of a Russian missile system.

Serkan Golge, a naturalized US citizen working for the US space agency in Houston, was arrested in July 2016 on a visit back to Turkey in the aftermath of a failed coup against President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Turkish authorities charged Golge with ties to self-exiled cleric Fethullah Gulen, whom Erdogan accused of orchestrating the mutiny. Golge was sentenced in 2018 to seven and a half years in prison despite US State Department protests that there was no credible evidence.

His wife, Kubra Golge, expressed joy at his release but said that he remained banned from traveling outside Turkey.

"We are happy but he still rejects the charges against him," she told AFP by email. "Hope we can come back soon to the US."

State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said that the United States would press for Golge to be able to return to the United States "as soon as possible."

"We want to commend them for doing the right thing today by releasing him," Ortagus told reporters. "We think it's welcome news."

Ortagus said that the United States was still seeking the release of detained local employees of US diplomatic missions in Turkey.

Golge was freed shortly after Erdogan spoke by telephone with US President Donald Trump, although an official summary by Turkey did not mention discussion of the Golge case.

Turkey in October also released an American pastor caught up in the crackdown, Andrew Brunson. His case had become a cause celebre among the conservative Christian base of Trump, who pressed Turkey through tariffs that sent the lira currency into a tailspin.

Golge's case had triggered growing anger in the United States. A bipartisan group of senators recently introduced a bill seeking sanctions on Turkish officials involved in the detention of US citizens, saying that Ankara's actions did not befit a NATO ally.

But Turkey still is at risk of US sanctions over its purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defense system. Washington is pressing Ankara to instead buy the US Patriot equivalent.

Erdogan has said the S-400 purchase was a "done deal" but in the phone call with Trump reiterated an offer to form a joint working group on the decision, according to the Turkish president's office.

The State Department voiced appreciation for Turkey as an ally but reiterated concerns about the deal, which US officials say could help Russia hone its system to target US hardware used by NATO.

"We're willing to engage with the Turkish government but our position remains the same that Turkey will face very real and very negative consequences if it completes the delivery of the S-400," Ortagus said.

The United States has already suspended Turkey's participation in the F-35 fighter jet program, in which Turkey had invested \$1 billion.

Washington and Ankara have also clashed over Syria, with Trump promising to pull out all 2,000 US troops from the war-battered nation following a

December phone conversation with Erdogan.

Trump has since slowed down the withdrawal partly because his aides fear that Turkey will use the absence of US troops to strike Syrian Kurdish fighters. The forces helped defeat extremists from the Daesh group, but Ankara associates them with separatists at home.



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