DID THE US AUTHORIZE ALBRIGHT AND SANGER TO PUBLISH THE IAEA IRAN REPORT?



Partial screengrab from ISIS website showing link for IAEA Iran report.

Major media organizations around the world are reacting to the IAEA's report on Iran's nuclear technology.

Okay, anyone who reads my posts knows that the sentence above should include a link to the IAEA's website and its posting of the original report. But I can't include that link, because the IAEA hasn't posted the report yet. The report is posted (pdf) at the website for David Albright's Institute for Science and International Security, where it showed up early yesterday afternoon, and at the New York Times (pdf), in association with a story by David Sanger and William Broad. I believe that the Times copy was posted several hours after the ISIS copy.

The IAEA's website has this information about the report, on a page with the heading "Report On Iran Nuclear Safeguards Sent to IAEA Board":

> An IAEA report on nuclear verification in Iran was circulated on 8 November 2011 to the Agency's Board of Governors and the UN Security Council.
>
> The Agency's 35-member Board of Governors will consider the report at its next meeting in Vienna from 17 November 2011. The document's circulation is currently restricted to

> IAEA Member States and unless the IAEA Board decides otherwise the Agency cannot authorize its release to the public.
>
> The report, *Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and Relevant Provisions of Security Council Resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, was issued by the IAEA Director General. It covers developments since the last report on 2 September 2011, as well as issues of longer standing.

Note that David Albright figured prominently in many media stories leading up to the appearance of the report. He clearly had already read the report and was busy spreading his take on what the report means.

Given that Albright's interpretation of the report fits so well with the Obama administration's take, a question that comes to mind is whether the US authorized Albright to post the report. The IAEA information quoted above states that the IAEA is not authorized to release the report but that it was sent yesterday to the IAEA's Board of Governors and to the UN Security Council. The information also states that current circulation is "restricted to IAEA Member States". The US is a Member State of the IAEA.

Did the US authorize Albright's release of the report? The operating statute for the IAEA is here. If I am reading the statute correctly, it is the agency's Board of Governors, to whom the report was sent yesterday, that has the authority to issue reports. Since it is the Board that officially releases reports, it seems likely that the Board also has the right to accept a report as submitted or send it back for revision prior to release. Now that the report has been publicly released prior to any Board action, that process has been disrupted.

Note also the image above (clicking on it will

give a clearer and slightly larger image). It is a partial screengrab from the ISIS website showing their link for the IAEA report. The smaller text there reads "The IAEA has released its highly anticipated safeguards report on Iran's nuclear program and allegations of weaponization efforts." Hmm, that's pretty inaccurate information from ISIS. The IAEA clearly states that it is not authorized to release the report to the public. Instead, it states the report was "circulated" to the appropriate recipients. Perhaps ISIS could provide us with more information on their decision to publish the report before the IAEA Board of Governors has had the chance to take action on it. The Sanger and Broad New York Times article also states the report was "released by the International Atomic Energy Agency on Tuesday". What is their basis for making that statement?


IAEA
Atoms for Peace
Board of Governors
GOV/2011/65
Date: 8 November 2011
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Original: English
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This image is from the cover of the report, where it clearly states "Restricted Distribution" (again, click on the image for a larger and clearer version).

As for the media responses to the report, it is noteworthy that "nanodiamonds" do not appear in any of the reports from Reuters, BBC (where you will find a lovely graphic on an implosion trigger), the Washington Post or the New York Times. Interestingly, the Times article contains a quote from "a senior Obama administration" official that points to the steel container explosives work and claims it is strong evidence of weapons work:

> A senior Obama administration official briefing reporters on Tuesday pointed to the I.A.E.A.'s evidence of work on detonation systems, including a special

> type of spherical initiation system that implodes a nuclear core with tremendous precision. “It’s a very telltale sign of nuclear weapons work,” he said.

It’s also a telltale sign of the creation of nanodiamonds, but I guess we won’t hear that from the US.

Update: In an email response to me, David Sanger of the New York Times provides this description of how IAEA reports are widely leaked:

> The IAEA reports are distributed to all member countries of the agency (I’ve lost count, but there are more than 150, I believe – the signatories of the NPT.) So they leak immediately, as you would expect. Eventually – after the board meetings that take place 10 days or so after the reports – they are usually posted on the IAEA site. You’ll see that all major news organizations obtained the report, nearly instantly after it was distributed to the member states.