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Day after Alleged Sabotage at Fordow: Hardly the Expected Emergency Response

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On January 25, 2013, news website WND published a [report](#) claiming that on January 21, the Fordow Fuel Enrichment Plant near the Iranian city of Qom was the target of a major explosion, thought to be an act of sabotage. The website claimed the alleged explosion partially destroyed the site and trapped 240 people underground. ISIS obtained from Astrium commercial satellite imagery of the site taken the day after the claimed explosion (figure 1). The imagery shows no exterior signs of an explosion or major damage. Although an underground explosion may not leave visible exterior signs of damage, ISIS observed no intensified activity in the form of emergency or cleanup vehicles that one would expect to see around the site in the wake of an incident of this magnitude (figure 1). Three white marks near one of the entrances of the southernmost tunnel at the site could be three vehicles. However, an emergency response would be expected to have been prompt and to have involved many more vehicles, particularly given the national importance of the gas centrifuge site and especially of the personnel working underground.

During the last few days, Iranian, Israeli, and U.S. officials [denied](#) that sabotage or a major incident occurred and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [concurred](#).



Figure 1. Satellite imagery of the Fordow fuel enrichment site from January 22, one day after a report of an alleged explosion that caused major damage to the site. The imagery shows no damage to the exterior and no apparent signs of emergency vehicles or activity at the tunnel entrances.