



June 5, 2009

IAEA Report on Syria

**Undeclared Uranium Particles Found in Hot Cell Facility in Damascus;
Syria Not Answering IAEA's Questions**

David Albright and Paul Brannan

The June 5, 2009 IAEA report on Syria contains several new pieces of information. An IAEA analysis of routine samples taken by the Agency in 2008 from the hot cells of Syria's existing small research reactor project in Damascus revealed the presence of anthropogenic natural uranium particles (anthropogenic material is derived from human activities). This type of uranium is not included in Syria's past declarations to the IAEA regarding materials at this site. The IAEA has previously reported that its soil samples from the area surrounding the destroyed building at the Dair Alzour site, also known as the Al Kibar reactor¹, in Syria has revealed the presence of anthropogenic natural uranium particles.² **These findings raise the question of whether Syria had taken natural uranium intended for a reactor at the Dair Alzour site and used a portion of it to perform cold-testing of reprocessing on a small scale at the hot cell facility.**

The June 5, 2009 IAEA report also discusses Syria's procurement of large quantities of barium sulphate, a shielding material, in addition to large quantities of graphite, a moderator for a North Korea-style reactor, and water pumping equipment. Syria responded to Agency questions and asserted that the shielding material was intended for radiation therapy centers. Syria also asserted to the IAEA that the water pumping equipment was intended for civil water purification and that the graphite was intended for the country's domestic steel industry. The IAEA has asked Syria for further clarification on its statements about these procurement activities.

¹ David Albright and Paul Brannan, *The Al Kibar Reactor: Extraordinary Camouflage, Troubling Implications*, The Institute for Science and International Security, May 12, 2008: http://www.isis-online.org/publications/syria/SyriaReactorReport_12May2008.pdf

² Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Syrian Arab Republic, IAEA, February 19, 2009: http://isis-online.org/publications/syria/IAEA_Report_Syria_Feb_2009.pdf

[Banner image credit: DigitalGlobe-ISIS]

236 Massachusetts Avenue, NE, Suite 500 Washington, DC 20002

TEL 202.547.3633 • FAX 202.547.3634

E-MAIL isis@isis-online.org • www.isis-online.org

One question is whether these large quantities of graphite and barium sulphate and the water pumping equipment were among the items acquired with help from the North Korean company, Namchongang (NCG).³ NCG helped Syria procure materials in its effort to build the reactor at Dair Alzour. The IAEA has asked Syria for information on allegations of activities of an import/export company from North Korea with an office in Syria, which we assume to be NCG. Syria responded to these questions and denied the allegations, according to the IAEA report.

Syria has not made any progress on answering the Agency's questions on the presence and origin of the anthropogenic natural uranium particles found at the Dair Alzour site, or the purpose of the site. Syria is also not providing adequate explanations on the nature of its cooperation with North Korean entities. Syria's letter to the IAEA on May 24, 2009, in response to IAEA questions, reiterated its earlier statements and did not include any new supporting documentation.

³ Robin Wright and Joby Warrick, *Purchases Linked N. Korean to Syria*, Washington Post, May 11, 2008: A11: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/10/AR2008051002810.html>