



Satellite Imagery Does Not Support Iranian Road Work Claim at Parchin

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In response to the widely reported claims of renewed activity at a site linked to high explosive work related to nuclear weapons within the Parchin military complex, the Iranian mission to the United Nations issued a statement stating in part:

The Parchin military complex covers a very vast area, which includes different military, industrial, administrative and residential sections. It is, thus, quite normal to have construction works underway at any time. During the past week, and due to sinking in part of the road running opposite the Mamloo Dam, which is in the vicinity of the Parchin Military Complex but detached there from, extensive construction works have been underway to repair the road. These works required the use of heavy bulldozers and other heavy construction machinery in the area.¹

ISIS analyzed commercially available satellite imagery taken on July 12, 19, and 26, 2015 but did not find any visible signatures related to road work on the road near the dam. If a section of the road opposite the dam had sunk, signatures such as trucks, bulldozers, and other vehicles and machinery associated with road work would be expected to be visible. However, none of these signatures are visible in the area identified by the Iranian mission.

In any case, and more importantly, the site linked to high explosive work related to nuclear weapons is about three kilometers south of the dam, meaning there are three kilometers worth of space, areas, locations, and parking lots to park vehicles between the dam and the site at issue. For example, there is a large parking lot half way between the suspicious site and the dam. On July 12 and 26, for example, there were over 20 vehicles parked there. Why would Iran choose to park vehicles three kilometers south of the dam and at the one site that would create intense concern and suspicion about Iran's intentions to comply with the recently negotiated Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)? These vehicles could have been parked in many other locations closer to the dam without arousing any suspicion.

There is no support in the imagery for the Iranian explanation. Iran's explanation appears to be that the vehicles at the suspect site were there inadvertently, but this explanation strains believability. In addition, the Iranian statement does not address the other activities, including those happening on the roof of the two southern buildings at the suspect site.

Iran's statement also contained strident denials that it had ever conducted nuclear weapons work at the Parchin site or anywhere else in Iran. These claims are refuted by IAEA and U.S. and other Western evidence. In the unclassified Verification Assessment recently submitted by the Administration to Congress, the administration has expressed confidence about knowledge of Iran's past work on nuclear weapons.

¹ Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations – New York, Press Release, August 5, 2015, <http://iran-un.org/en/2015/08/06/press-release-3/>.

Iran’s strident and blanket denials in its statement and elsewhere suggest that it has no intention of addressing the IAEA’s concerns about the possible military dimensions (PMD) of its nuclear programs. The IAEA will undoubtedly gain access to Parchin after Iran takes samples at the site. The IAEA should be prepared for wholesale deception on the part of Iran. The United States and its allies should be prepared not to waive sanctions unless Iran addresses these PMD concerns. Iran employing deception and obfuscation to complete a set of steps as outlined in the JCPOA is not adequately addressing the IAEA’s PMD concerns and is certainly not sufficient for Iran to receive sanctions relief.

