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Steam Emitted From Second Khushab Reactor Cooling Towers; Pakistan May Have Started Operating Second Reactor

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GoogleEarth recently posted satellite imagery from GeoEye featuring the Khushab nuclear site in Pakistan. Imagery dated December 31, 2009 shows what appears to be steam distorting the view of some of the cooling tower fan blades for the second plutonium production Khushab reactor (see figure 1). This would indicate that the second Khushab reactor is at least at some state of initial operation.

On April 23, 2009, ISIS determined from DigitalGlobe satellite imagery that [major construction of the second Khushab reactor was likely finished](#), and that it could soon begin operation. In February 2010, [Zia Mian reported](#) that Pakistan may have completed the second Khushab reactor, citing a recent visit to the site by the Prime Minister where he reportedly congratulated engineers for “completing important projects.”

Pakistan has [one plutonium production reactor already operational](#) at Khushab. Pakistan began building the [second Khushab reactor](#) sometime between 2000 and 2002. Pakistan began building a [third Khushab reactor](#) sometime around the middle of 2006. These Khushab reactors support Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program.



Image Credit: GeoEye via Google Earth
Image Date: December 31, 2009

Row of mechanical draft cooling towers

Second Khushab reactor building

Steam appears to be distorting the view of some of the cooling tower fan blades