

# Iran Joins Group of Nuclear Power Nations

by Ramtanu Maitra

Sept. 21—Iran celebrated connecting its first nuclear power plant to its electrical grid on Sept. 12. The 1,000-MW power plant in the port city of Bushehr was completed with Russia's help. It will reach its full power-generating capacity by the year's end, following further testing, official Iranian reports said.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin hailed the efforts of Iranian and Russian experts, Iran's Fars news agency reported.

The ceremony was attended by Russian Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko, head of the Rosatom nuclear agency Sergei Kiriyenko, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi, and head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization Fereydoon Abbasi-Davani. In his speech on that occasion, Shmatko said: "Together with our Iranian counterparts, we went through difficulties and problems building the Bushehr power plant. And today we can be proud of the results that are drawing the attention of the whole world. I'm sure our further cooperation in operating the station and developing other nuclear energy projects will be distinguished by the atmosphere we created while working together."

Besides being the 31st nation in the world with at least one operating commercial nuclear power plant, Iran earned the distinction of becoming the first nation in Southwest Asia, except for Israel, to commission a nuclear power plant (NPP). Iran's nuclear power plant came alive at a time when many nuclear power nations, confused by the mishaps at Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plants in the aftermath of the massive March 11 earthquake and tsunami, put on hold, or abandoned, electrical power generation from nuclear fission.

Moscow is committed to training Iranian physicists and technicians for Bushehr at the Kurchatov Institute and the Novovoronezh Nuclear Power Plant. Iranian nuclear scientists also visited the Scientific Research Design Institute of Energy Technologies in Moscow and, according to former Minister of Atomic Energy Aleksandr Rumyantsev, Russian specialists will assist Iranians in the operation of the first unit of the Bushehr

NPP for the first six years of its operation.

In 2005, the then-head of Russia's Atomic Energy Agency claimed that "Tehran intends to build another six nuclear reactors," adding that "when Iran announces new tenders to construct nuclear reactors, we'll take part in them." Since then, however, no other statements have been made regarding additional Russian construction projects in Iran.

There were other reasons for Iran to celebrate the commissioning of the Bushehr plant. In 1975, when Iran was ruled by a monarch, Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi, a staunch ally of the West against the Soviet Union, the German firm Kraftwerk Union AG, a joint venture of Siemens AG and AEG, signed a contract worth \$4-6 billion to build the pressurized water reactor NPP in Bushehr. Construction of two 1,196-MW plants was scheduled to have been completed in 1981, but was aborted because of a series of events that followed, including the Iranian Revolution and the taking of U.S. hostages in 1979, and the West's increased hostility towards Tehran.

## Past Western Support ...

The West was not always hostile to Iran, however. In 1957, the United States and Iran signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement as part of the U.S. Atoms for Peace program. "Ten years later, the United States supplied 5.545 kg of enriched uranium—5.165 kg of which contained missile isotopes—to Iran for fuel in a research reactor," wrote the Oxford Research Group's Dr. Farhang Jahanpour. "The United States also supplied 112 kg of plutonium—104 kg of which were fis-





newsru.com, "Novosti Dnya" program

Russian media coverage of the Iranian launch of the Bushehr nuclear power plant, Sept. 12, 2011. Shown are Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi (right) and Sergei Kiriyenko, the director of Russia's nuclear power company, Rosatom.



vesti.ru, "Rossiya 24" program



newsru.com, "Novosti Dnya" program

sile isotopes—for use as ‘start-up sources for research reactor.’”<sup>1</sup>

In 1973, a joint stock company, Eurodif, was formed by France, Belgium, Spain, and Sweden. In 1975, Sweden’s 10% share went to Iran as a result of an arrangement between France and Iran. The French government subsidiary company Cogema and the Iranian government established the Sofidif (Franco-Iranian Society for Enrichment of Uranium by Gaseous Diffusion), with 60% and 40% shares, respectively. In turn, Sofidif acquired a 25% share in Eurodif, which gave

Iran its 10% share of that company. The Iranian monarch lent \$1 billion (and another \$180 million in 1977) for the construction of the Eurodif factory, in exchange for the right to buy 10% of the production of the site.

In 1975, as President Gerald Ford’s Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger signed and circulated National Security Decision Memorandum 292, “U.S.-Iran Nuclear Cooperation,” which laid out the administration’s negotiating strategy for the sale of nuclear energy equipment projected to bring U.S. corporations more than \$6 billion in revenue. At the time, Iran was pump-

1. “Chronology of Iran’s Nuclear Programme 1957-2007, <http://www.irandefence.net/showthread.php?t=12318>

ing as much as 6 million barrels of oil a day, compared with about 4 million barrels that it pumps daily today. The Ford Administration made clear that the deal would ensure Iran a complete nuclear fuel cycle. President Ford's strategy paper said that the "introduction of nuclear power will both provide for the growing needs of Iran's economy and free remaining oil reserves for export or conversion to petrochemicals."

### ...And Betrayal

However, with the fall of the Shah in 1979, and the emergence of a cleric-ruled Iran under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Western nations began working actively to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear power nation. A March 27, 2005 *Washington Post* article, "Past Arguments Don't Square with Current Iran Policy," quoted Charles Naas, who had been deputy U.S. ambassador to Iran in the 1970s, saying that technical experts at the time were very concerned about proliferation, "but the nuclear deal was attractive in terms of commerce, and the relationship as a whole was very important." At that time, Dick Cheney was the White House Chief of Staff, Donald Rumsfeld was the Secretary of Defense, and Paul Wolfowitz was associated with the national security apparatus in Washington.

Documents show that U.S. companies, led by Westinghouse, stood to gain \$6.4 billion from the sale of six to eight nuclear reactors and parts. Iran was willing to pay an additional \$1 billion for a 20% stake in a private uranium enrichment facility in the United States, which would supply much of the uranium to fuel the reactors.

Following the overthrow of the Shah, Western companies, under pressure from their respective governments, began abandoning Iran. France refused to give any enriched uranium to Iran, and Eurodif refused to return Iran's investments. Iran was denied uranium, which, as a joint owner in the French Eurodif international enrichment facility, it was entitled to obtain.

In January 1979, Kraftwerk Union stopped working at the Bushehr nuclear project, with one reactor 50% complete, and the other 85% complete; it fully withdrew from the project in July 1979. Kraftwerk said its action was based on \$450 million in overdue payments owed by Iran. By then, Kraftwerk had already pocketed \$2.5 billion of the total contract. The French company Framatome, a subsidiary of Areva, also withdrew.

Iran tried to find a contractor to finish the plant during the 1980s, but failed, owing to U.S. pressure on potential suppliers. In April 1984, a U.S. State Depart-

ment spokesman pointed out that it would take at least two to three years to complete the reactors at Bushehr, and that its light water reactors were not particularly well-suited for a weapons program. Despite that State Department assessment, a couple of months later, in June 1984, the Minority Whip of the U.S. Senate, Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) asserted that the Islamic Republic of Iran was on its way to becoming a nuclear weapons state and was seven years away from building its own nuclear weapon.

Then came the Iraq-Iran War. Between 1984 and 1988, the Bushehr reactors were damaged by multiple Iraqi air strikes, and work on the nuclear program came to a standstill. In 1984, Kraftwerk made another assessment, with an apparent intent to resume work on the project. However, that assessment led nowhere, as the war continued to rage.

### Neo-Cons Launch 'Regime Change'

In the post-9/11 period, at the time Iran was identified by President George W. Bush as one of three nations that constituted an "Axis of Evil," Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Wolfowitz—all of whom had advocated that Iran become a nuclear-power-generating nation in the 1970s—and a few other U.S. neo-cons went at it hammer and tong to isolate Iran and prevent it from achieving a nuclear-power-generation capability. Cheney, who was advocating air attacks on Iran to take out its nuclear installations, said in 2005: "They're already sitting on an awful lot of oil and gas. Nobody can figure why they need nuclear as well to generate energy." Obviously, a "nobody," such as himself, had no problem in 1975 figuring out that Iran indeed needed nuclear power to generate electricity.

Once Iran was identified as a charter member of the "Axis of Evil," the U.S. and Britain went to work, with the help of the accommodating United Nations, to slap Iran with one round of sanctions after another. The first round, under UN Resolution 1737, was adopted unanimously by the Security Council in December 2006. It called for blocking Iran's import and export of "sensitive nuclear material and equipment" and for freezing the financial assets of those involved in Iran's nuclear activities. The Council decided that all countries should prevent the supply or sale of equipment and technology that would aid Iran's nuclear program in any way.

In March 2007, the Security Council voted to toughen sanctions, banning all of Iran's arms exports. It also froze the assets and restricted the travel of people it



deemed involved in the nuclear program.

Further restrictions imposed in March 2008 encouraged scrutiny of the dealings of Iranian banks. It also called upon countries to inspect cargo planes and ships entering or leaving Iran, if there were “reasonable grounds” to believe they carried goods prohibited by previous resolutions.

The fourth round of sanctions, UN Resolution 1929, was imposed in June 2010, at the goading of the Obama Administration, following the betrayal-stained footsteps of the Bush Administration and its neo-con cabal. This called for measures that would prohibit Iran from buying heavy weapons such as attack helicopters and missiles; toughened rules on financial transactions with Iranian banks; and increased the number of Iranian individuals and companies that were targeted with asset freezes and travel bans. There was also a new framework of cargo inspections to detect and stop Iran’s acquisition of “illicit” materials.

### Russia’s Help

These sanctions weakened Iran financially, but did not curb its determination to have nuclear power plants.

In August 1995, Russia and Iran signed a ten-year contract under which Russia would supply nuclear fuel, made at the Novosibirsk Chemical Concentrate Plant, for the Bushehr plant. In February 2002, Rosatom announced that the Bushehr NPP’s first reactor would become operational in September 2003. The first unit was completed in early 2009, after the project experienced a series of delays caused by insufficient funding from the Iranian government, caution on the part of Russia, and mounting international pressure.

One issue that caused delay was the fuel, but it was resolved. Russian officials said Iran had signed a pledge to ship all the spent uranium fuel back to Russia for re-processing, thereby eliminating the possibility that any of it could be used to make nuclear weapons. Russia has insisted that the Bushehr project is essential for persuading Iran, which signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, to cooperate with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and fulfill its obligations under international nuclear nonproliferation agreements.

The Bushehr NPP was then scheduled to go online sometime in late 2010. Iran began loading fuel into its nuclear power station in August of that year, in a ceremony attended by Russian officials. The U.S. State Department said that it saw no “proliferation risk” from the plant. The British Foreign Office, however, said in a statement that, “It is totally unacceptable that a country that so blatantly violates [international treaties] should enjoy the fruits of using nuclear energy.”

Then, the head of Iran’s atomic energy agency, Ali Akbar Salehi, told the news media that the commissioning of the plants would be delayed; the process of placing fuel rods would be completed in early November. “Two or three months from then, the electricity generated by the plant will be connected to the grid,” he added, pushing the timeframe to early 2011. He had previously blamed the delays on “severe hot weather,” and insisted that the plant was no longer being affected by the sophisticated Stuxnet computer virus that Iran’s Foreign Ministry has described as a “new game of soft warfare” by the country’s enemies. “We implemented measures to protect our computers last year, but during the past two months, these [cyber attack] activities increased dramatically,” Salehi said on state radio. “Fortunately, we were able to neutralize the enemy’s objective without involving the media. The fact these activities are continuing smoothly is evidence of this.”

# 10 Years Later

An LPAC-TV Feature Film

Eight months before the September 11, 2001 attacks, Lyndon LaRouche forecast that the United States was at high risk for a Reichstag Fire event, an event that would allow those in power to manage, through dictatorial means, an economic and social crisis that they were otherwise incompetent to handle. We are presently living in the wake of that history.

<http://larouchepac.com/10yearslater>

