

# Iran Debates the IAEA Roadmap

by [Nima Gerami \(/experts/nima-gerami\)](/experts/nima-gerami)

Aug 12, 2015

Also available in

[العربية \(/ar/policy-analysis/ayran-tnaqsh-khartt-altryq-l-alwkalt-aldwlyt-lltaqt-aldhryt\)](/ar/policy-analysis/ayran-tnaqsh-khartt-altryq-l-alwkalt-aldwlyt-lltaqt-aldhryt)

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

[Nima Gerami \(/experts/nima-gerami\)](/experts/nima-gerami)

Nima Gerami, a 2014 adjunct fellow at The Washington Institute, is a research fellow with the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction National Defense University.



Brief Analysis

---

**The Rouhani administration is insisting on the confidentiality of its 'roadmap' with the IAEA in order to quell domestic criticism of the JCPOA and bolster the nuclear program's security.**

In a side deal to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) reached in Vienna, Iran concluded a joint "roadmap" with the International Atomic Energy Agency to resolve longstanding concerns about the possible military dimensions (PMD) of its nuclear program. In contrast to previous agreements with the IAEA, Iran's nuclear negotiators are insisting on keeping important parts of this roadmap confidential, an issue that has raised considerable attention not only in the U.S. Congress, but also in Iran's parliamentary debate on the JCPOA.

## BACKGROUND

One of the most contentious issues in the congressional debate over the JCPOA is the efficacy of its proposed transparency and confidence-building measures, particularly with regard to questions about PMD issues that emerged during a comprehensive investigation launched by the IAEA in 2003 ([see PolicyWatch 2269, "Background on the 'Possible Military Dimensions' of Iran's Nuclear Program" \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/background-on-the-possible-military-dimensions-of-irans-nuclear-program\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/background-on-the-possible-military-dimensions-of-irans-nuclear-program)).

Hours before Iran and the P5+1 negotiators announced the JCPOA on July 14, Iran and the IAEA signed a roadmap containing two confidential agreements: one to resolve the agency's PMD questions, and the other to address concerns about Iran's Parchin military complex, where high-explosives testing relevant to nuclear weapons research is believed to have occurred. The roadmap sets out a "sequence of activities" by both parties to resolve these concerns by October 15; the IAEA will then issue a final assessment by December 15. On August 5, in a rare closed-door meeting with the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, IAEA director-general Yukiya Amano reportedly claimed that he could not share details about this roadmap, in accordance with the agency's rules on safeguards confidentiality.

In Iran, the Rouhani administration has submitted the JCPOA text to its parliament, the Majlis, for review. While the U.S. Congress has until September 17 to vote on the agreement, Iran's legal process for approving it has no fixed timeline and is still under debate (see [PolicyWatch 2460, "Iran's Security Concerns and Legal Controversies Over the Nuclear Deal"](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-security-concerns-and-legal-controversies-over-the-nuclear-deal) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-security-concerns-and-legal-controversies-over-the-nuclear-deal>)). Rouhani's team favors approving the JCPOA through the Supreme National Security Council (chaired by the president) rather than the Majlis before the deal is officially endorsed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Conversely, Iranian critics of the JCPOA demand that the Majlis approve it, and they have challenged the Rouhani administration for brokering the IAEA roadmap without informing parliament in advance.

Khamenei, who will ultimately decide whether Tehran implements the nuclear deal, has yet to adopt a public position on either the JCPOA or the roadmap, instead opting for debate in the Majlis to sidestep responsibility. Accordingly, Rouhani has issued an executive order to enforce legislation requiring the Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) to brief the Majlis every six months on implementation of the nuclear accord.

## IRANIAN REACTIONS TO THE ROADMAP

In an unprecedented departure from previous censorship on the nuclear issue, Iranian media publicly broadcast the first of the Majlis hearings on the JCPOA, held July 26. During a two-hour session with deputy nuclear negotiators Abbas Araghchi and Majid Takht-Ravanchi, parliamentarians raised concerns about the confidentiality of the IAEA roadmap and questioned whether IAEA inspections would cross the Supreme Leader's redlines. In reply to questions on the roadmap, Araghchi stated, "Iran has no desire for [the roadmap] to be published," noting that the IAEA is "obligated to protect Iran's intelligence and nuclear secrets." In an additional session with the Majlis on July 28, AEOI president Ali Akbar Salehi claimed, "The roadmap per se is not confidential. What is confidential is how IAEA inspectors access our sites once they are here, and that is pretty common in other parts of the world."

IAEA director-general Amano's meeting with Washington lawmakers also elicited a sharp response in Tehran. In an August 16 editorial, hardline newspaper *Kayhan*, the Supreme Leader's mouthpiece, claimed that the visit "decreased confidence in the impartiality and credibility of the IAEA." Even the more moderate daily *Hamshahri* warned that "Amano's trip may lead to failed implementation of the deal between Iran and the P5+1," urging that he be asked to testify before the Majlis to ensure that he did not disclose "confidential secrets."

Tehran's reaction to the confidentiality issue stems from its belief that the IAEA previously leaked information about the nuclear program that enabled foreign espionage, sabotage, and the assassination of four nuclear scientists who have since been venerated as "martyrs." For example, in an interview with Fars News, Majlis deputy Hamidreza Taraqqi warned that the IAEA may use Iran's confidential information for "political and military purposes," adding that "the issue of confidentiality is invalid and meaningless" because the Rouhani administration signed onto the roadmap without first informing parliament. Interestingly, members of Rouhani's negotiating team have privately echoed the concerns of their domestic critics in expressing mistrust for the IAEA's ability to protect confidential information. During a recent meeting with the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, Araghchi reportedly stated: "We do not have an optimistic view of the [IAEA]. There is no doubt that they will release the information [that we are giving them]. We need to be careful in the information that we supply to them...We are not only dealing with the agency and these spies. We are dealing with all the countries that own nuclear programs. There are formulas and methods to prevent supplying information to the agency's inspectors. We did not know about these methods in the past and supplied some information that should not have been supplied." On August 2, the Iranian government removed the report containing these comments.

Notwithstanding this deep-seated mistrust of the IAEA, the Rouhani administration's insistence on confidentiality

also underscores its perception that the agency's roadmap for resolving PMD issues is independent from the JCPOA, contrary to the U.S. view that the agreements are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Araghchi and Salehi have repeatedly asserted that Iran's agreements with the IAEA are not part of the JCPOA and thus not subject to international scrutiny. Despite signing onto the roadmap, Iranian officials consider the resolution of PMD issues to be more of a political formality than a necessary precondition to implementing the JCPOA.

This distinction is tied to Iran's broader strategy of strongly rejecting allegations of past military nuclear activity and portraying PMD allegations as fabricated -- despite the fact that Tehran previously agreed to work with the IAEA on resolving these concerns in 2007 and 2013 (Iranian officials even circulated the 2007 work plan to all IAEA member states and made the text available to the public). In a July 21 interview, Salehi stated: "We do not accept the PMD issue...We are resolving this [issue] in a political-technical framework in order to deny [the West] any pretext...If the IAEA was not meant to be convinced in the regular track, it would never be convinced, regardless of what we did." He added, "The technical issues are now being resolved in a political framework. They have a set timeframe, and God willing, the issue must be resolved by December 15. In short, [the IAEA] will be the losers. As I have said, the issue has received political backing. The work [of the IAEA] must be reasonable. They cannot do anything unreasonable."

Beyond the roadmap's near-term challenge of resolving PMD issues, the IAEA will need to reach a so-called "broader conclusion" within eight years that all of Iran's nuclear material remains in peaceful use. Obtaining this assurance depends on Iran's provisional implementation of the Additional Protocol, an enhanced inspections regime that gives the agency expanded access rights at declared and undeclared sites. That implementation is not expected to begin until sometime in 2016 according to the JCPOA timeline -- in other words, the protocol's enhanced access provisions will not apply to the four-month period during which the IAEA roadmap must resolve concerns regarding PMD and Parchin. Therefore, if the IAEA requests access to sites, personnel, or information in order to resolve a PMD-related question, it will have to rely on Iran's full cooperation.

## CONCLUSION

**A**lthough the IAEA's confidentiality principle is enshrined in its founding statute and its safeguards agreements, the P5+1 could have pushed Iran to make its agreements with the agency public as a condition of the JCPOA, allowing for greater confidence in how the parties resolve PMD issues. In particular, they could have pointed to the precedent set in 2007 when Tehran circulated its PMD work plan with the IAEA; instead, they appear to have given Tehran a face-saving solution to closing the PMD file.

On the Iranian side, the Rouhani administration appears to be insisting on confidentiality in order to quell domestic criticism of the JCPOA and bolster the security of the nuclear program. To the extent that Tehran views the roadmap as independent from the JCPOA, Washington and its partners can dispel ambiguity by asking for further Iranian commitments on cooperating with the IAEA and satisfactorily addressing PMD concerns by the December 15 deadline. Despite the risks of acquiescing to the roadmap's confidentiality, the IAEA, Iran, and the P5+1 all have a vested interest in ensuring that, contrary to previous attempts, Tehran will be held accountable to its promises of transparency and fully resolve PMD concerns.

*Nima Gerami is a research fellow at the National Defense University's Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the National Defense University, the Defense Department, or the U.S. government. ❖*



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## [Bennett's Bahrain Visit Further Invigorates Israel-Gulf Diplomacy](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## [Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Ben Fishman

(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## [The UAE Formally Ceases to be a Tax-Free Haven](#)

Feb 14, 2022

◆  
Sana Quadri,  
Hamdullah Baycar

(/policy-analysis/uae-formally-ceases-be-tax-free-haven)

### TOPICS

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](#)

[Proliferation \(/policy-analysis/proliferation\)](#)

### REGIONS & COUNTRIES

