A bomb for Iran 'unfeasible'?

By Thomas J. Spiesk

It is unfeasible for Iran to use its growing nuclear capacity for weapons production, a Harvard researcher recently returned from Iran told an MIT audience.

Speaking at a Center for International Studies seminar on Wednesday afternoon, Anne Cahn said that Iran's present lack of technically trained people and the types of reactors that it has ordered would make weapons production difficult if not impossible.

The ability to produce nuclear weapons, Cahn said, is dependent on three elements: availability of usable materials, access to the necessary technology, and the incentive to do so. She stated that although the Shah of Iran's incentive to produce nuclear weapons is problematic and his access to usable nuclear materials is limited, knowledge of the necessary technology is widespread.

There is no hard data about the Shah's intentions, Cahn asserted. She cited the growing arms superiority in the Persian Gulf and pointed to the concerns of the Western powers that nuclear proliferation might tend to neutralize that superiority.

Cahn also argued that as the nuclear powers now feel that the superpowers have not made the nuclear issue as salient as it was during the cold war, there was no incentive for Iran to go nuclear. She noted that the non-nuclear powers now feel that the superpowers have not made the benefits available, and have not actively sought disarmament. Cahn warned that this attitude could cause Iran to go nuclear.

In addition, the first signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, obligated the non-nuclear signatories to not develop atomic weapons. The signatories who had already developed nuclear weapons pledged to bring the benefits of nuclear technology to non-nuclear nations, and agreed that they would actively seek disarmament.

In 1970, Iran became one of the first signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The treaty, obligated the non-nuclear signatories to not develop atomic weapons. The signatories who had already developed nuclear weapons pledged to bring the benefits of nuclear technology to non-nuclear nations, and agreed that they would actively seek disarmament.

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