

# Iran's Uranium Processing Site Bombed by Israel?

By Bob Mayberry

On April 11, 2021, an explosion at Iran's Natanz uranium enrichment site destroyed the power supply to its underground uranium processing centrifuges. Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, called the attack an act of "nuclear terrorism," and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif condemned the bombing as a "war crime." Iran said there were no fatalities.



US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin was with former Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem April 11, the day Iran's uranium processing site was bombed most likely by Israeli agents with US approval. Photo: Menahem Kahana/UPI/Pool

The *New York Times* reported that "American and Israeli intelligence officials said there had been an Israeli role." The morning of the bombing, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin was visiting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

Israel, which has between 80 and 400 nuclear weapons and has never joined the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, neither confirmed nor denied involvement in the attack. Iran has no nuclear weapons and ratified the NPT in 1970.

## More Leaking from Hanford Rad Waste Tanks

By Kelly Lundeen

In the 1980s, when highly radioactive liquid wastes were found to be leaking from old, corroded underground tanks at the Hanford Reservation in Eastern Washington State, the Department of Energy announced that double-walled tanks were the answer.

Now a second double-shell radioactive waste tank has been found to be leaking at the superfund site, which holds the distinction of being the most radioactively contaminated site in the US. There are additional confirmed leaks in 67 single-shell tanks out of 177.

One thousand, seven hundred gallons of radioactive waste have leaked into the soil from Tank B-109 since it was first suspected of leaking in March 2019, but the Department of Energy (DOE) waited over a year before launching an investigation. The leaking 123,000-gallon tank is loaded with liquid and solid waste from plutonium production done there from 1946-1976, and there are no plans to stop the leak.

The Hanford site is responsible for producing two-thirds of the plutonium used for the United States' cold war nuclear weapons. DOE spokesperson Geoff Tyree assured the public that, "Contamination in this area is not new and mitigation actions have been in place for decades."

"The tanks hold half a century's worth of highly radioactive and poisonous by-products of nuclear weapons production," and "about a million gallons of liquids has leaked," the *New York Times* reported in 1997. If contaminated ground water reaches the Columbia River which borders the Hanford site, radioactive material could enter the food chain, "and could expose people to radiation for centuries," the *Times* predicted back then.

At the last five-year review of the decades-long cleanup and waste treatment operations in 2017, the US Environmental Protection Agency Project Manager Dennis Faulk reported, "Contaminated in-area groundwater is still flowing freely into the Columbia" [River]. Ken Niles, retired head of the Oregon

Prior to the April attack, Iran began using new advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium-235 up to 20 percent. Enriched uranium is produced by feeding uranium hexafluoride gas into centrifuges that separate the uranium-235, the most suitable isotope for nuclear fission. Uranium enriched to 90% or more can be used to make nuclear weapons, the BBC noted. Shortly after the attack, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced that Iran would begin enriching uranium to 60%. Although Rouhani repeated that Iran's nuclear activities were "exclusively peaceful," France, Germany and the UK all expressed "grave concern" since there is no civilian atomic reactor using uranium enriched to 60%. White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki described Iran's decision — not the bombing of a uranium processing complex — as "provocative."

On April 29, Israeli Intelligence Minister Eli Cohen said, "Israel will not allow Iran to attain nuclear arms.... Our planes reach everywhere in the Middle East, and certainly Iran." Meanwhile, White House officials met with Israeli delegates and agreed only on the "significant threat" posed by Iran. The Israeli ambassador to the US announced that the Biden administration would consult with Israel about any renewal of the anti-nuclear deal with Iran known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed to in 2015 between Iran, China, France, Russia, the UK, the US and Germany — together with the European Union. What Israel's act of war provokes from Iran remains to be seen.

— Reuters, "Our warplanes can reach Iran, Israeli minister warns amid nuclear talks," April 29; Reuters, "Iran to begin 60% uranium enrichment after nuclear site incident," April 13; Associated Press, "Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz nuclear site," April 12; and *New York Times*, "Blackout Hits Iran Nuclear Site in What Appears to Be Israeli Sabotage," April 11, 2021

Department of Energy's Hanford program admitted of the cleanup effort, "Its cost overruns and schedule delays are legendary." Niles went on to say, "Some scenarios show treatment continuing well past the year 2100, and all scenarios show cost estimates in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

The citizen's watchdog group Hanford Challenge paints a sobering picture for those who work around the tanks. "Since March 2014, over 100 workers suffered vapor exposures serious enough to seek medical evaluation," the group reported in April.

— State of Washington Department of Ecology, Apr. 29, 2021; *Tri-City Herald*, Aug. 10, 2020; Hanford Challenge, 2019; "Radioactive Waste Still Flooding Columbia River, EPA Says" *Courthouse News*, June 8, 2017; "Radiation Leaks at Hanford Threaten River, Experts say," *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1997

## Wielding the Ban on Nuclear Weapons

By Felice & Jack Cohen-Joppa

January 22 was a day of celebration for nuclear disarmament activists around the world: the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force! The historic day saw hundreds of actions in many countries — from the remote Trinity and Nevada test sites to the Golden Rule peace boat sailing off the coast of Hawaii, banners were unfurled declaring "Nuclear Weapons are Illegal." Check out an inspiring five minute video we produced showing photos of dozens of US actions at: [vimeo.com/515883787](https://vimeo.com/515883787).

Building on the organizing for public actions on January 22 that was initiated by Nukewatch, the Oak Ridge Environmental Peace Alliance, the Nuclear Resister, and the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, there are now six US working groups that are meeting with this common mission: "Collaborating to fulfill the promise of the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and to press the United States to sign and ratify the Treaty."



Susan Crane and John LaForge walked out of Büchel Air Force Base in Germany Aug. 6, 2018 after occupying the top of one of its bunkers reportedly holding US nuclear weapons.

## Nukewatch Staffer, Convicted of Trespass & Property Damage in Germany, will Appeal

Nukewatch co-director John LaForge was convicted of trespassing and damage to property May 31 in Cochem, Germany. The charges stemmed from two 2018 nuclear weapons protest actions directed against the US nuclear bombs deployed at the Büchel Air Force Base in the southwest state of Rhineland-Pfalz. The trial was only the second for a US citizen in a 25-year-long campaign against "nuclear sharing" between the United States and Germany at Büchel. Over 90 similar trials have resulted from recent protests at the base, but only residents of Germany or The Netherlands have been prosecuted.

Dennis DuVall, formerly of Prescott, Arizona became the first US citizen convicted of the same charges in May 2020, although the long-time member of Veterans for Peace now lives in Germany.

LaForge, 65, was given a penalty of 600 euros (\$727) or 50 days of either community service or jail. The bench trial conducted by Cochem District Court Judge Alexander Fleckenstein took place in LaForge's absence. LaForge will appeal the conviction.

In the protest on July 15, 2018, LaForge and 17 others entered the base through five openings cut in the base's chain link perimeter fence in broad daylight on a Sunday morning. In a subsequent action August 6, the anniversary of the US atomic bombing of Hiroshima, LaForge and Susan Crane of the Redwood City, California Catholic Worker also entered the base unhindered, in daytime, and even climbed to the top of one of the bunkers reportedly holding some of the 20 US hydrogen bombs on base. Charges were not brought against Crane.

About his May 31st guilty verdict LaForge said, "The court refused to consider federal and international laws that forbid preparations for mass destruction. It is grimly ironic that my defense relies on the Nuremberg Charter and Principles which were created in

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