

UN: Iran pulled 27 nuke cameras

Move could be 'fatal blow' to nuclear deal

Jon Gambrell and Philipp-Moritz Jenne
ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIENNA – Iran has started removing 27 surveillance cameras from nuclear sites across the country, the head of the U.N. atomic watchdog said Thursday, warning this could deal a “fatal blow” to the tattered nuclear deal as Tehran enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels.

The development comes a day after the International Atomic Energy Agency’s board of governors censured Tehran for failing to provide “credible information” over man-made nuclear material found at three undeclared sites in the country.

It also follows months of deadlocked talks aimed at restoring the Islamic Republic’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Tensions remain high across the wider Middle East over the accord’s collapse as U.S. sanctions and rising global food prices choke Iran’s ailing economy, putting further pressure on its government and its people.

“This, of course, poses a serious challenge to our ability to continue working there,” warned Rafael Mariano Grossi, the IAEA’s director-general.

He added that if an agreement cannot be reached to restore the cameras in three to four weeks, “this would be a fatal blow” to Iran’s tattered nuclear deal. Already, Grossi warned that without the cameras, Iran could make centrifuges and divert them to unknown locations.

“When we lose this, then it’s anybody’s guess,” he added.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge it was removing the 27 cameras, though it earlier threatened it could take more punitive steps. State media aired footage Thursday of workers disconnecting two IAEA cameras from power.

“We hope that they come to their senses and respond to Iran’s cooperation with cooperation,” Behrouz Kamalvandi, an Iranian nuclear program spokesman, said Wednesday of the IAEA officials. “It is not acceptable that



IAEA Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi says Iran is removing 27 of the agency’s surveillance cameras from nuclear sites. HIRO KOMAE/AP, FILE

they show inappropriate behavior while Iran continues to cooperate.”

Iran’s hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi struck a much more combative tone Thursday while visiting the central city of Shahr-e Kord.

“Do you assume that we withdraw because of resolutions?” he asked. “In the name of God and in the name of the nation, Iran will not withdraw from its stance a single step.”

Grossi spoke at a hastily called news conference in Vienna, standing next to an example of the cameras installed across Iran. Iran will remove IAEA cameras from sites, including in Tehran, the underground Natanz nuclear enrichment facility, the facility in Isfahan and the Arak heavy water reactor in Khondab, he said.

“Forty-something” IAEA cameras would remain active in Iran, Grossi said, though Tehran has been withholding IAEA footage since February 2021 as a pressure tactic to restore the atomic accord. “We are in a very tense situation with the negotiations on the revival of the (nuclear deal) at a low ebb,” Grossi added. “Now we are adding this to the picture; so, as you can see, it’s not a very nice one.”

On Wednesday, Iran said it shut off two devices that the IAEA uses to monitor enrichment at Natanz. Grossi acknowledged that Thursday, saying that among the devices being removed was the Online Enrichment Monitor and flowmeter. Those watch the enrichment of uranium gas through piping at enrichment facilities and allowed inspectors to track its work remotely.

Meanwhile, the IAEA earlier Thursday said Iran informed the agency that it planned to install two new cascades of the IR-6 at Natanz. A cascade is a series of centrifuges hooked together to spin uranium gas to enrich it.

An IR-6 centrifuge spins uranium 10 times faster than the first-generation centrifuges that Iran was once limited to under its nuclear deal with world powers. As of February, Iran was using a cascade of IR-6s at its underground facility at Fordo, according to the IAEA.

Iran earlier said it planned to install one cascade of IR-6s at Natanz. The IAEA said it “verified” the ongoing installation of that cascade Monday, while the installing of the newly promised two other cascades had yet to begin.

Iran and world powers agreed in 2015 to the nuclear deal, which saw Tehran drastically limit its enrichment of uranium

in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions. In 2018, then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the accord, raising tensions across the wider Middle East and sparking a series of attacks and incidents.

Talks in Vienna about reviving the deal have been stalled since April. Since the deal’s collapse, Iran has been running advanced centrifuges and rapidly growing a stockpile of enriched uranium.

Nonproliferation experts warn Iran has enriched enough up to 60% purity – a short technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90% – to make one nuclear weapon should it decide to do so.

Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, though U.N. experts and Western intelligence agencies say Iran has had an organized military nuclear program.

Building a nuclear bomb would still take Iran more time if it pursued a weapon, analysts say, though they warn Tehran’s advances make the program more dangerous. Israel has threatened in the past that it would carry out a preemptive strike to stop Iran – and already is suspected in a series of recent killings targeting Iranian officials.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett praised Wednesday’s IAEA board vote to censure Tehran as “a significant decision that exposes Iran’s true face.”

The “IAEA vote is a clear warning light to Iran: If Iran continues its activity, the leading countries must bring the matter back to the U.N. Security Council,” said Bennett, who made an unannounced trip Thursday to the United Arab Emirates.

The crisis risks escalating further, however.

On Wednesday night, a drone exploded in the northern Iraqi city of Irbil in the northern Kurdish region, slightly wounding three people and damaging cars and a nearby restaurant, officials said. The Iraqi Kurdish region’s directorate-general of counterterrorism alleged on Thursday that the Iran-backed militia Kataeb Hezbollah, or Hezbollah Brigades, launched the drone.

The militia later denied launching the drone attack.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX RATE

The Socorro Independent School District will hold a public meeting at 6:00 PM. on Tuesday, June 21, 2022 in the District Service Center, Board Room, 12440 Rojas Dr., El Paso, Texas 79928. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the school district's budget that will determine the tax rate that will be adopted. Public participation in the discussion is invited.

The tax rate that is ultimately adopted at this meeting or at a separate meeting at a later date may not exceed the proposed tax rate shown below unless the district publishes a revised notice containing the same information and comparisons set out below and holds another public meeting to discuss the revised notice. Visit [Texas.gov/PropertyTaxes](https://www.texas.gov/PropertyTaxes) to find a link to your local property tax database on which you can easily access information regarding your property taxes, including information about proposed tax rates and scheduled public hearings of each entity that taxes your property.

Maintenance Tax	\$0.854600/\$100 (Proposed rate for maintenance and operations)
School Debt Service Tax Approved by Local Voters	\$0.397284/\$100 (Proposed rate to pay bonded indebtedness)

Comparison of Proposed Budget with Last Year's Budget

The applicable percentage increase or decrease (or difference) in the amount budgeted in the preceding fiscal year and the amount budgeted for the fiscal year that begins during the current tax year is indicated for each of the following expenditure categories:

Maintenance and Operations	1.73%	Increase
Debt Service	1.95%	Increase
Total Expenditures	1.75%	Increase

Total Appraised Value and Total Taxable Value (as calculated under Section 26.04, Tax Code)

	Preceding Tax Year	Current Tax Year
Total appraised value* of all property	\$ 16,854,595,446	\$ 21,031,751,055
Total appraised value* of new property**	\$ 579,901,398	\$ 817,030,423
Total taxable value*** of all property	\$ 13,024,718,015	\$ 15,268,860,315
Total taxable value*** of new property**	\$ 527,258,549	\$ 771,101,937

* "Appraised value" is the amount shown on the appraisal roll and defined by Section 1.04(8), Tax Code.
** "New property" is defined by Section 26.012(17), Tax Code.
*** "Taxable value" is defined by Section 1.04(10), Tax Code.

Bonded Indebtedness

Total amount of outstanding and unpaid bonded indebtedness* \$802,207,677
* Outstanding principal.

Comparison of Proposed Rates with Last Year's Rates

	Maintenance & Operations	Interest & Sinking Fund*	Total	Local Revenue Per Student	State Revenue Per Student
Last Year's Rate	\$ 0.876500	\$ 0.398954*	\$ 1.275454	\$ 3,765	\$ 6,978
Rate to Maintain Same Level of Maintenance & Operations Revenue & Pay Debt Service	\$ 0.903010	\$ 0.404910*	\$ 1.307920	\$ 3,843	\$ 6,951
Proposed Rate	\$ 0.854600	\$ 0.397284*	\$ 1.251884	\$ 3,854	\$ 7,038

*The Interest & Sinking Fund tax revenue is used to pay for bonded indebtedness on construction, equipment, or both.
The bonds, and the tax rate necessary to pay those bonds, were approved by the voters of this district.

Comparison of Proposed Levy with Last Year's Levy on Average Residence

	Last Year	This Year
Average Market Value of Residences	\$ 168,608	\$ 208,034
Average Taxable Value of Residences	\$ 135,801	\$ 146,068
Last Year's Rate Versus		
Proposed Rate per \$100 Value	\$ 1.275454	\$ 1.251884
Taxes Due on Average Residence	\$ 1,732.07	\$ 1,828.60
Increase (Decrease) in Taxes		\$ 96.53

Under state law, the dollar amount of school taxes imposed on the residence homestead of a person 65 years of age or older or of the surviving spouse of such a person, if the surviving spouse was 55 years of age or older when the person died, may not be increased above the amount paid in the first year after the person turned 65, regardless of changes in the tax rate or property value.

Notice of Voter-Approval Rate: The highest tax rate the district can adopt before requiring voter approval at an election is \$1.251884. This election will be automatically held if the district adopts a rate in excess of the voter-approval rate of \$1.251884.

Fund Balances

The following estimated balances will remain at the end of the current fiscal year and are not encumbered with or by a corresponding debt obligation, less estimated funds necessary for operating the district before receipt of the first state aid payment:

Maintenance and Operations Fund Balance(s)	\$ 67,351,191
Interest & Sinking Fund Balance(s)	\$ 17,008,155

A school district may not increase the district's maintenance and operations tax rate to create a surplus in maintenance and operations tax revenue for the purpose of paying the district's debt service.

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