

DAHL, REUTERS GRANT ANONYMITY TO “SOURCES” PEDDLING IRAN INFO REJECTED BY IAEA

Back in October, I noted that as the P5+1, IAEA and Iran all moved toward agreements on Iran’s nuclear technology, the usual pathway employed by those who wish to disrupt peaceful talk and agitate toward military solutions was remarkably silent. Here’s a bit of how I described that process and its apparent silence at that time:

I have remarked in many of my posts on the Iranian nuclear technology issue that “diplomats” in Vienna have a long history of leaking what they claim to be incriminating evidence against Iran to reporters there, primarily George Jahn of AP (look at the pretty cartoon!) and sometimes Fredrik Dahl of Reuters. Joby Warrick at the Washington Post often chimes in with information leaked from his sources who also seem to prefer a violent path. The intelligence is often embellished by David Albright and his Institute for Science and International Security. While there have been improvements lately by Jahn and Dahl in questioning the material leaked to them and providing alternative information available from other sources, much damage has been done to the diplomatic pathway by this process.

Remarkably, there is little to no pushback so far from this group to the progress made in Geneva. A story co-authored by Jahn late yesterday afternoon fits with most of the reporting on the meeting and his single quote from an unnamed source is

innocuous

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Dahl also has no disruptive quotes in the several Reuters stories to which he contributed. Completing their shutout from the trio of their usual helpers, the hawks planted no inflammatory language in Joby Warrick's story in today's Washington Post. The David Albright pathway to propaganda also hasn't been activated, as the most recent post on his site at the time of this writing was dated October 3.

The dogs that aren't barking now are the most encouraging sign of all that there is widespread optimism that diplomacy has a real chance of succeeding.

Sadly, Fredrik Dahl and Reuters have broken the silence from those who want to disrupt talks, but even within this blatant attempt to derail negotiations, there are elements of hope. Dahl has granted anonymity to "sources" who tell him that the IAEA last year considered putting together a new report on Iran's nuclear activities similar to the annex included in the 2011 report that prompted much controversy. After making only vague hints about what sort of evidence might have been in the report, Dahl then goes on parrot the sources in saying the IAEA chose not to issue the new report because of warming relations between Iran and the negotiating countries. He also states the IAEA had no comment, but he completely ignores the likelihood that the IAEA did not provide the new report because the "evidence" in question was found not to be credible. Dahl and Reuters completely ignore the history of known false information being supplied to IAEA and the ongoing process of new bits of information from the "laptop of death" being leaked by the sources in question.

Here is how Dahl's report frames the information

being fed to him:

The U.N. nuclear watchdog planned a major report on Iran that might have revealed more of its suspected atomic bomb research, but held off as Tehran's relations with the outside world thawed, sources familiar with the matter said.

Such a report – to have been prepared last year – would almost certainly have angered Iran and complicated efforts to settle a decade-old dispute over its atomic aspirations, moves which accelerated after pragmatic President Hassan Rouhani took office in August.

According to the sources, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has apparently dropped the idea of a new report, at least for the time being.

There was no immediate comment from the IAEA. The sources said there was no way of knowing what information collected by the agency since it issued a landmark report on Iran in 2011 might have been incorporated in the new document, although one said it could have added to worries about Tehran's activities.

Dahl relies completely on his sources saying that the IAEA chose not to issue the report so as not to anger Iran without considering that the IAEA very likely found the "new" information to be neither new nor credible.

A bit further in the piece, we get a vague description of what the "new" information might have been:

The sources, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue, suggested the more recent material concerned extra detail about alleged research and experiments that were covered in the November 2011

report. A new report would probably have included “updated information on PMD” which could have “reinforced the concern” about Iran, one said.

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One source said it was believed that the Vienna-based IAEA had received more information on suspicions of nuclear yield calculations, but it was not known to what extent this would have made it into a new report on Iran.

Ah, the nuclear yield calculations. I would have thought that Dahl’s “sources” would have given up on that long ago. See this analysis by Yousaf Butt for a detailed retrospective of the last time the issue of these calculations came up, and how the graph released at that time was shown to be almost certainly a fabrication. Further, Butt shows in the article that the IAEA even relied on this fabrication in the 2011 report annex.

In a more recent opinion piece, Butt showed how the IAEA’s behavior has complicated the Iran nuclear issue, but I take heart in the fact that the IAEA clearly was urged last year to add to the 2011 annex and chose not to do so. Despite the framing preferred by Dahl’s sources, I would even go so far as to say that the IAEA found this new evidence not to be credible enough to include in a new report. And that would make this new evidence especially shaky, since much of the material from 2011 has been thoroughly debunked.

Just last week, in my post describing the framework that is now in place for the P5+1 to negotiate a final agreement with Iran, I remarked on the statement from Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif that neither side will surprise the other with new claims:

That bit must come as a huge disappointment to the crews in Israeli and US intelligence operations who

“find” new documents whenever they need to disrupt diplomatic progress.

If the best this crew can do at the current time is to complain about “new” information they tried to foist on the IAEA last year, I’d say things are moving along very well at this point.