



Iran Greater Nuclear Threat Than Iraq Was: Blix

Posted GMT 11-7-2007 16:7:19

Former United Nations chief weapons inspector Hans Blix has warned that Iran's nuclear ambition is more serious than was the case with Iraq in 2003.

Dr Blix delivered the Sydney Peace Prize Lecture last night, saying he was still optimistic the international community could escape the threat posed by nuclear weapons.

But he said that souring relations between the big world powers could raise long-term military tensions.

His comments came as Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said the country's nuclear program was "irreversible", voicing continued defiance in the face of possible new international sanctions.

Speaking before the lecture, Dr Blix said US hostility towards Iran was similar to that expressed by the US before the Iraq invasion.

"The US is orchestrating allegations or contentions -- some which may be true, some which may not be proven -- about Iranian participation in the Iraqi situation with the roadside bombs and the training of militias," he said.

"That sort of orchestration you saw before the Iraq war."

The crucial difference with Iran now was that Iraq was "practically prostrate" in 2003.

"They had had sanctions since 1991 and were in miserable shape and everyone knew that," he said.

"In the case of Iran, this is very different. Iran is a country that has a big military apparatus.

"They have also a large nuclear sector with two nuclear power reactors that are ready to go into operation, research reactors going on, a lot of people and a lot of money.

"Therefore the suspicions and concerns about Iran and enriched uranium are far more substantial than they were in the case of Iraq."

President Ahmadinejad, who rejects US accusations the country is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, said yesterday that Iran had 3000 centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium.

Enriched uranium can fuel power plants but also, if refined further, provide material for bombs. Western experts say 3000 machines could make enough enriched uranium for an atomic bomb in about a year.

"The Iranian nation has entered the phase of industrial scale of nuclear fuel (production) and the train of the Iranian nation's progress is irreversible," President Ahmadinejad told a rally in South Khorasan province broadcast live on state television.

"Today, we've reached 3000 centrifuges," he said.

When Iran announced launching the 3000 centrifuges in April, the UN nuclear watchdog agency, the International Atomic Energy Agency, said Tehran had only 328 centrifuges up and running at its uranium enrichment facility at Natanz.

In a recent report, drawn up by IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei, the agency put the number of centrifuges working in Natanz at close to 2000, with another 650 being tested.

Dr Blix said the main concern related to Iran's intentions, not its nuclear capacity.

"The Iranians themselves assert that they have no intentions to go for nuclear weapons, that it is abhorrent to them," he said.

"But it is also clear they could change their mind one day and if they did that they would be a couple of years closer to a weapon."

Assyrian International News Agency

By Daniel Flitton
www.theage.com.au

© 2011, Assyrian International News Agency. All Rights Reserved. [Terms of Use.](#)