

Revelations about a new nuclear site under construction by the Iranian regime

Madan Sharq (Kothar Project)

July 2013

The network of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI/MEK) inside Iran has obtained reliable information on a new and completely secret site designated for the regime's nuclear project.

This information has been collected in the course of a year from nearly 50 sources in various organs of the regime.

Some of the organs from which MEK sources have been able to obtain information regarding this site include the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the Ministry of Defense, the Atomic Energy Organization, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces, and some local organizations and institutions.

General information regarding the site

The newly constructed site is designated for nuclear activities. It is funded through a completely secret source from the national security budget. The code name for the project is "Madan Sharq" (literally meaning the Eastern Mine) or "Kothar Project".

It is worth mentioning that the national security budget is allocated to highly sensitive, top secret sites and centers. Funding for the regime's nuclear sites is obtained from the national security budget.

This site is located in a complex of tunnels under the mountains situated in the vicinity of the town of Damavand (north of Tehran), and it belongs to the Ministry of Defense. First phase construction began in 2006 and was completed recently. As part of the first phase, the interior of the tunnels, four warehouses in the outside area, required facilities for the site, the general area, and associated roads have been constructed.

Exact location

This site is located 10 Kilometers east of the town of Damavand in an area known as Asb-Cheran. To get to the site from Tehran-Damavand road, five kilometers after the junction of Haraz and Firooz Kooh towards Firooz Kooh (Gilanvand), there is a side road on the left hand side (pointing towards the north). (At the start of the road there is a red-colored chicken farm warehouse that is under construction). About 1.3 Kilometers into the side road, and after passing a workshop that belongs to Iran Pol construction company, the site's first guard post can be seen. The guard post is located on the left hand side of the road.

Information about site interior and its overall dimensions

This site consists of four tunnels and has been constructed by a group of engineering and construction companies associated with the engineering arms of the Ministry of Defense and the IRGC.

The tunnels are located about 2 Kilometers from the main entrance guard post.

Two of the tunnels are about 550 meters in length, and they have a total of six giant halls. One of the tunnels is the shape of a horse shoe. The construction of the tunnels and their internal halls has been completed. The tunnel gates can withstand explosions.

In the main area there are four large warehouses.

At the initiation of the project, the Ministry of Defense occupied 120 acres of the land of that area and designated it for this site. But the area was subsequently expanded and currently the total area designated to this site is 300 acres.

Organs and officials involved in site construction and making it operational

As mentioned, the site is under the supervision of the Ministry of Defense (MOD).

The Engineering department of the MOD is in charge of this project. The head of MOD Engineering is IRGC Brigadier General Madani-zadeh, who supervised the operations of several companies that were involved in this project.

The officer who manages the project directly on behalf of the MOD is IRGC General Karamat Tavakoli. Engineer Farhad Mirza-pour has been Takavoli's deputy for the project.

Role of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh

It is significant that the Iman Gostaran Mohit Company supervises this project and controls the sections dealing with chemical, biological and nuclear activities. The Director General of the Iman Gostaran Mohit Company is Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, the key figure in the Iranian regime's nuclear program.

Fakhrizadeh, a senior officer in the IRGC, was named in the detailed annex of the November 2011 IAEA report, which provided details about the possible military dimensions of the regime's nuclear program. He is in charge of SPND (the Farsi abbreviation for the Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research), which is the organ responsible for research and development of the weaponization aspects of the mullahs' nuclear program. SPND and Fakhrizadeh have worked directly with the Defense Minister since 2011.

The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) first revealed the identity of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh during a press conference in Paris in November 2004. The IAEA has requested access to and interviews with Fakhrizadeh, given his unique and prominent role in the regime's nuclear program. However, the Iranian regime has rejected the IAEA request.

Engineer Farhad Mirzapour, one of Fakhrizadeh's deputies, is the technical manager of construction for the site.

The construction of tunnels, halls and working areas were completed by the Omran Institute, which is affiliated to the IRGC's construction arm, Khatam al-Anbia Garrison.

The Omran Institute handled the construction of the Fordow secret nuclear site (near Qom, where currently about 3,000 centrifuges have been installed).

This part of the project was first carried out by IRGC Brigadier General Abolhassani from Omran. He later relegated the task to an engineer called Assadi.

Information and intelligence on the site are highly sensitive

The regime has taken extreme security measures and has been vigilant during the construction of the site, in an attempt to prevent leaks and to control all intelligence aspects.

For that purpose, in addition to the counter-intelligence office of the MOD, which is normally assigned to protect information on secret and military sites, given the extraordinary sensitivity of this particular site, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) has also been directly engaged to ensure secrecy.

As such, even directors and engineers of the MOD would be vetted when entering the area and are required to work under very tight restrictions. The severity and degree of these restrictions have been seen as unusual by these individuals.

MOD staff have access to various parts of the site based only on their security clearance level and are not allowed to visit unauthorized sections.

MOD permission is required at the guard post in order to enter the site. Accessing the tunnels requires a separate clearance issued by the counter-intelligence office of the MOD.

The level of secrecy has been so high that during the years of constructing the site, even the local authorities were kept completely in the dark regarding internal facilities and the objective for constructing the site. The directors and engineers working at the site are barred from talking to anyone about their work. Guidelines and directives issued by the counter-intelligence office of the MOD stipulate that any conversations or divulging of information regarding their work, even in contacts with companies that are affiliated to the regime itself, should take place in official and formal meetings and in the presence of senior officials from the counter-intelligence office.

The reason for the name "Madan Sharq"

The site is called "Madan Sharq" because there is a mine by this name located near it. The regime can use this association to cover up and justify its excavations into the mountains and construction activities without raising suspicions.

This ploy closely resembles the one used in constructing the Fordow site, where in order to divert attention from the real activities going on at Fordow, the regime borrowed the name of a village in its vicinity.

Initiation of the second phase

The construction of the second phase of this site began only recently. The Pars Garma Company, one of the biggest MOD affiliates involved in digging tunnels and building defense installations, has been engaged to complete the second phase.

30 tunnels and 30 warehouses are expected to be constructed as part of the second phase.

The designs of this phase are completed by Pars Garma Company and will be implemented by engaging small-sized MOD companies.

Site construction process and some of the organs involved

- Design and initiation of the project:

The design and initiation of construction was completed by Shams Omran of the MOD and an individual called Pour-Hemmat. He worked under the supervision of engineer Anavi, the Executive Deputy of the Company.

- Excavating, constructing tunnels and associated areas:

The MOD handed over some of the responsibilities to the engineering arm of the IRGC to continue construction. In particular the Omran Organization of the IRGC (affiliated to the Khatam al-Anbia Garrison) and headed by an engineer named Moussavi carried out this part of the project.

- Constructing the general area and outside buildings:

Omran road building company affiliated to the MOD carried out the work for the outside area of the site, the road network and the required external facilities.