

## 'Exemptions' in Iran nuke deal



A long-range S-300 missile system is displayed by Iran's army during a parade marking National Army Day, in Tehran, in April this year.

Tom Coghlan, The Times, 12:00AM September 3, 2016

The Iranian nuclear deal included a series of secret exemptions allowing Tehran to hold on to an undisclosed quantity of enriched uranium beyond the deadline, a report claimed yesterday. The material, in excess of the agreed 300kg, was described as 3.5 per cent low-enriched uranium "liquid, solid and sludge waste". A second exemption was for an unknown quantity of 20 per cent enriched uranium. It was described as "lab contaminant".

The report from the Washington based Institute for Science and International Security also says Iran has been allowed to keep 19 radiation containment chambers, known as "hot cells", in which nuclear materials can be stored. The report claimed that they could be "misused for secret, mostly small-scale plutonium separation efforts".

Low-enriched uranium can be further refined to weapons-grade material by enriching it using centrifuges to around 90 per cent. The Iranian nuclear deal and a tentative thaw after decades of hostility to the West are held up as a central foreign policy achievement of the Obama years. But Republican leaders and some Democrats have vowed to reverse the January 15 deal, which has been fiercely criticised by Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The report claims that Western powers agreed a series of secret exemptions to the terms of the treaty, to allow Iran to meet a deadline for the deal. It was co-authored by former UN

weapons inspector David Albright, who quoted a series of unnamed US officials involved in the negotiations. The exemptions or loopholes are happening in secret, and it appears that they favour Iran," Mr Albright said. He warned the exemptions risked setting a precedent for Iran to demand further concessions.

The report said congress was informed of the exemptions in confidential documents after they had been granted. However, a leading critic of the deal, the Democratic senator Bob Menendez, who is a prominent member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said: "I was not aware nor did I receive any briefing (on the exemptions)."

The report ignited a chorus of Republican criticism, including from the campaign of presidential nominee Donald Trump. His campaign sought to link the findings to Mr Trump's Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton, who was secretary of state when secret talks were held with Iran but had left office before formal negotiations began. "The deeply flawed nuclear deal Hillary Clinton secretly spearheaded with Iran looks worse and worse by the day," said retired army general Michael Flynn, a top Trump adviser.

"It's now clear President Obama gave away the store to secure a weak agreement that is full of loopholes."

The White House said it took "significant exception" to some of the report's findings, saying that the easing of sanctions was always dependent upon Iran's adherence to the agreement. "The implementation date was driven by the ability of the (International Atomic Energy Agency) to verify that Iran had completed the steps that they promised to take," White House spokesman Josh Earnest said.

"That is what precipitated implementation day. Since then Iran has been in compliance with the agreement," Mr Earnest said.

Iranian authorities reported yesterday that they had detained another foreign national on charges of spying. The semi-official Tasnim news agency did not name the suspect, but said he was arrested in the northern city of Gorgan in July, and so appeared to be referring to Iranian-American Robin Shahini. Authorities did not announce any allegations when Mr Shahini, 46, was detained on July 24.

The Times, Reuters, AP