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Cyberattacks Target Two Iranian Institutions

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Hackers launched attacks on two Iranian government institutions this week, a senior official said on Thursday.

Some government bodies had since temporarily shut down internet services as a precaution, Abolqasem Sadeqi, from the government's Information Technology Organization, told national TV. "The cyber attacks which happened on Monday and Tuesday are under investigation," Sadeqi said. They were "important and on a large scale," he added.

One of the targets was the electronic infrastructure of the country's ports, the Tasnim news agency reported Friday.

"Sworn enemies have been trying for some time to carry out cyberattacks," a statement by the Ports and Maritime Organization said.

The statement said deterrent measures had been taken to prevent an interruption in the "organization's missions."

Meanwhile, Iran's Ministry of Information and Communications Technology said the attack was not massive, adding it only targeted systems in two government agencies.

The information security agency MAHER said it had issued notices to various government departments demanding them to be prepared for potential cyber attacks.

The notices, however, did not mean that addressed government departments had been actually targeted by such attacks, it added.

"The incidence of the major cyber attack was merely related to two government organizations and responsible authorities are dealing with the issue," said the statement.

The cyber security agency also said some government departments had independently decided to cut some of their services to carry out technical tests, a move which it said had come only "out of precaution".

"Though from the view point of MAHER this measure was not deemed necessary," it said.

Some of those cyber attacks have sought to influence routine but sensitive activities across the Iranian nuclear and energy infrastructure or disrupting the country's core communication networks.

An explosion targeting one of Iran's key nuclear sites in July was believed to be a result of such sabotage activity.

Iranian authorities announced at the time that the occupying regime of Israel could have played a role in the incident in the site in the central city of Natanz although they fell short of directly blaming the Tel Aviv regime for the explosion.

A large-scale distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attack that took place in early February was also dealt with swiftly as authorities were able to restore the network to normal within several hours.

Iran says it is on high alert for on-line assaults, which it has blamed in the past on the United States and other foreign regime, including Israel.

U.S. officials said in October 2019 that the United States had carried out a cyber attack on Iran.

Iran Blasts U.S. 'Genocide' Against World Nations



This file photo shows Iranian medical personnel attending to a COVID-19 patient.

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) -- Iran's representative to the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly has denounced Washington's "unilateral, illegal" restrictions that are hampering the country's fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

Muhammad Zareian told a virtual meeting of the committee, also attended by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, that the coercive unilateral measures pose a real threat to human rights.

He criticized UN human rights bodies for inaction in the face of "this crime and genocide, which stems from mass violations of human rights" against tens of millions of people across the world.

About U.S. sanctions on Iran, he said "the impact and scope of the unlawful unilateral coercive measures imposed on ordinary Iranians have been exacerbated even during the pandemic."

"The U.S. government has targeted, for political gains, my fellow citizens, in particular, the most vulnerable among them, including women, children, the elderly and those in need of medical attention.

This is nothing but an act of economic terrorism," Zareian said.

Since pulling out of a historic multilateral deal with Iran and other major powers in 2018, the U.S. has been piling up pressure on Iran through reinstating the sanctions that have been lifted under the agreement and adding new bans.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump claims the sanctions do not target humanitarian items, but the bans have made foreign banks and companies extremely wary of engaging in any trade with Tehran.

On Tuesday, the New York Times said the "cruel" U.S. embargo amounts to collective punishment of tens of millions of innocent Iranians.

To hermetically seal the Iranian economy off from the rest of the world, the paper said, the hawkish U.S. administration has slapped draconian embargoes on Iran, the latest of which targeted 18 Iranian banks that appear to have been the last financial institutions with international ties left untouched by Treasury Department sanctions.

In its latest move, the U.S. has not even spared the country's

Bank Maskan, which specializes in mortgages, and Bank Keshavarzi Iran, which lends to farmers, the paper said.

"This sweepingly broad application of sanctions amounts to collective punishment for tens of millions of innocent Iranians," the newspaper said. "The new sanctions against these 18 banks are particularly cruel during a pandemic," it added.

Although Trump administration officials insist the sanctions, which will take effect in December, don't apply to food and medicine and they claim they have provided waivers to companies that want to sell needed supplies to Iran, the article said, the process of getting waivers approved is too "cumbersome and time-consuming" to meet health needs during a pandemic, not to mention the obstacles facing the country in its banking transactions due to the sanctions, which make it difficult for Iran to touch the export revenue it earns.

The paper also criticized the U.S. administration for obstructing a \$5 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund to help Iran combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The Holy Qur'an

And (as for) the foremost, the first of the Muhajirs and the Ansars, and those who followed them in goodness, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them for ever; that is the mighty achievement.

The Holy Qur'an (9.100)

PRAYER TIMINGS

Noon (Zohr)	11:49
Evening (Maghreb)	17:43
Dawn (Fajr) "Tomorrow"	04:50
Sunrise "Tomorrow"	06:14

It said the embargoes have also enraged America's closest allies as the "unilateral and extraterritorial nature of the sanctions" have threatened their companies, prompting the countries to refuse to have Washington's back at the UN Security Council in its bid to extend an arms embargo on Iran, which is to expire in days.

"The United States has been virtually alone on the United Nations Security Council in trying to ratchet up pressure on Iran," the article said.

"The more the United States throws its weight around, the more appetite there will be around the world for establishing alternative financial mechanisms that will ultimately deprive Washington of its global clout."

The paper also recommended that American officials stop piling sanctions on Iran during the pandemic, noting the United States' so-called maximum pressure campaign "has not achieved the ultimate goal of forcing the Iranian government to capitulate to Washington."

As Barbara Slavin, director of the Future of Iran Initiative at the Atlantic Council, says the American "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran is "sadism masquerading as foreign policy," it said.

Bolton Admits Receiving Money From MKO

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Former U.S. national security advisor John Bolton has admitted receiving tens of thousands of dollars from the Mujahedin Khalq Organization (MKO) when the group was still a banned terrorist outfit and not removed from Washington's blacklist.

In an interview with Al Jazeera's Presenter Mehdi Hassan, the Iran hawk was asked to expound on his long-time animosity with the Islamic Republic as well as his relationship with the MKO, which has long been responsible for death, assassination and torture of thousands of Iranians.

"How much of your antipathy towards Iran is to do with geopolitics, and how much is to do with the fact that you have a long association with a group called MKO which was once a terrorist group banned by the state department while you worked there?" Hassan asked Bolton.

"You don't mention that in your book; I looked in your book and there was no mention of the MKO. I think you took tens of thousands of dollars for several speeches. I just wonder how much that influences your policy on Iran?" he said.

The former U.S. national security

advisor adopted a confident posture and responded, "You know that I took tens of thousands of dollars for speeches in liberal universities in the United States."

Bolton sought to muddle over the question, saying it was in fact former U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton who the MKO off the U.S. list of terrorist organizations.

Bolton's retort was swiftly brushed aside by Hassan who said, "She took it off in 2012 and you spoke with them in 2010 when they were still a banned group."

"You were in Paris speaking at a MKO rally in 2010 when they

were still a banned group according to the State Department," he added.

The MKO has conducted many assassinations and bombings against Iranian officials and civilians since the 1979 victory of Iran's Islamic Revolution. It notoriously sided with former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein during his 1980-88 war on Iran.

Out of the nearly 17,000 Iranians killed in terrorist assaults since the Revolution, about 12,000 fell victim to the MKO's acts of terror.

The terrorist outfit was on the U.S. list of terrorist organizations

until 2012. Major European countries, including France, have also removed it from their blacklists. The anti-Iran terrorists enjoy freedom of activity in the U.S. and Europe, and even hold meetings with American and EU officials.

Europe is home to the rogue entity and American taxpayers' money has funded the atrocities of the corrupt group.

Bolton, along with U.S. and European figures, including President Donald Trump's personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani, have attended several annual conferences held by the MKO.

Agency Vows to Press Ahead With Nuclear Program

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says Tehran will press ahead with using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes regardless of Washington's baseless allegations against the program.

The AEOI made the comment in a tweet in response to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's fresh claim that Iran was seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

"Scientists in Iran's nuclear industry, taking heed of the

Leader's guidelines, stand ready to counter the United States' bullying and unilateralism when it comes to using nuclear energy," said the tweet.

"A strategic principle for Iran's Islamic establishment is to be far-sighted when it comes to using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and nuclear power will always be under the Iranian nation's control," it added.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran nuclear scientists, following the

guidelines of the Supreme Leader (of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei), are ready to face the coercion and unilateralism of the U.S. government relating to the use of the nuclear energy," the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) tweeted on Thursday.

Iran's strategic principles, it said, feature a far-sighted approach towards peaceful deployment of nuclear energy, adding "nuclear power will remain in the

dominance of the Iranian nation forever."

The United States is the only country to have ever used such weapons of mass destruction.

Washington has also been providing political and material support to the occupying regime of Israel that is known to be the only possessor of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. Tel Aviv is also responsible for assassinating six Iranian nuclear scientists and trying to sabotage Iran's nuclear pro-

gram, atrocities that would have likewise not been possible without Washington's lenience.

On Wednesday, Iran's UN ambassador warned against a return of the Cold War-era mentality, highlighting the nuclear threats posed by the U.S., Israel and Saudi Arabia to the world's security.

Speaking at a meeting of the UN General Assembly First Committee also known as the Disarmament and International Security Committee, Majid

Takht-Ravanchi said the international security environment continues to deteriorate as a result of protracted conflicts and arms race while dialog mechanisms are eroding.

"The use and the threat of use of force arise in different parts of the world. Global military spending and arms competition are increasing, and the tensions of the Cold War era have returned to the world that has grown more complex.

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