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Stuxnet hits Bushehr again. Russia warns of nuclear explosion

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Bushehr reactor loaded - still not activated

Iran's atomic energy chief Ali Akbar Salehi said on Jan. 29 that the Bushehr nuclear power plant would be connected to the national grid on April 9. He "forgot" about Tehran's promise to fully activate its first nuclear reactor Tuesday, Jan. 25. **DEBKAfile's** intelligence and Moscow sources reveal that on that day, Iran's hand on the switch was held back at the last minute by Sergei Kiriyyenko, chief of Rosatom (the Russian national nuclear energy commission which oversaw the reactor's construction). He came hurrying over to warn Tehran that Stuxnet was back and switching the reactor on could trigger a calamitous nuclear explosion that could cost a million Iranian

lives and devastate neighboring populations. He complained to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that the Iranian nuclear and engineering staff were ignoring the presence of the malware and must be stopped.

Kiriyyenko told the Iranian president that the Russian engineers employed at the reactor notified Moscow that Stuxnet was again attacking the Bushehr systems after apparently taking a rest from its first onslaught last June. There was no telling which systems had been infected, because a key feature of the virus is that the systems' screens show they are working normally when in fact they have been fatally disabled. Activating the reactor in these circumstances could cause an explosion far more powerful than the disaster at the Russian reactor at Chernobyl, Ukraine in April 1986, which released 400 times more radioactive material than the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

The impression the Rosatom chief had gained from his staff at Bushehr was that the Iranian teams had been ordered to activate the reactor at any price to prove that the Islamic Republic had beaten Stuxnet. This concern overrode security. The consequences of ignoring this fearful hazard, said Kiriyyenko, were unthinkable and would destroy the revolutionary Islamic regime in Tehran in their wake.

Kiriyyenko began worrying when he heard the Iranian nuclear commission's spokesman Hamid Khadem-Qaemi claim on Jan. 17 that Bushehr had not been affected by Stuxnet.

Our Iranian sources report that, after seeing the Russian official off, Ahmadinejad ordered the reactor to stay shut down.

This week, Salehi, who is also Iran's foreign minister, hinted at the cause of the delay when he said: "The reactor has started its operation and the next step is to reach critical phase which will happen by the end of Bahman (February 20) in presence of Russians. We have said before that due to some tests, we may have to face delays but these delays are around a week or two." He added, "We aim at launching Bushehr nuclear reactor safely not to merely launch it."

In Jerusalem, Maj-Gen. Aviv Kohavi, the new head of IDF military intelligence - MI, who appeared before the Knesset Security and Foreign Affairs Committee for his first briefing on Jan. 25 said Bushehr could be quickly converted from producing electricity for civilian use to a military reactor and incorporated into Iran's weapons program.

The next day, Jan. 26, Moscow took the unusual step of demanding a NATO investigation into last year's computer attack on the Russian-built nuclear reactor in Iran.

Dmitry Rogozin, Russia's ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, said: "His

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