

# Those Three Iranian “Accidents” In a Single Week

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In late June there were three major “accidents” – or possibly cyberattacks – in Iran within the space of a week. The first, on June 25, was a huge explosion that could be seen miles away in in Tehran. Iranian authorities described this as a gas tank leak leading to an explosion in a civilian part of the huge military complex at Parchin. Western observers using satellite photos concluded that the explosion was actually at another military base, the missile complex at Khojir, where precision-guided missiles are manufactured and tested. The damage was far greater – an entire hillside burned – than could be explained by the explosion of a gas tank, and skepticism only increased when Iran displayed what it claimed was the very gas tank in question, intact except for a small hole.

A second mysterious explosion took place five days later at a medical center in Tehran, killing 18 people. The cause of the explosion was, again, announced to have been a gas leak that then exploded.

A third mysterious explosion, on July 2, took place at at Natanz, where Iranians explained that “one of the industrial sheds under construction” at the Natanz uranium enrichment

plant had blown up. The AEOI (Atomic Energy Organization of Iran) later published a photo showing a partly burned building, which US-based analysts identified as a new centrifuge assembly workshop.

The three mysterious explosions were reported on [here](#):

*Three mysterious incidents, linked by explosions – at least two of them at secretive nuclear and weapons facilities – have rocked Iran in the past week. All three have been reported by Iranian media with various excuses about how they are less serious than they appear, that they are being investigated and that there is no major story to tell.*

*On June 25, a massive explosion, seen many miles away in Tehran, burned a hillside near a missile complex at Khojir. On June 30, a medical center suffered a fire in Tehran, killing at least 18 people. And on July 2, an incident at Iran's Natanz enrichment facility was mentioned by the country's official media, without elaboration. Officials claimed that only a shed was damaged. In each case, officials appeared to try to get ahead of the story by obfuscating about the*

*This leads to key questions about why so many explosions or incidents have affected key aspects of Iran's military-industrial complex. Rumors posted on social media and elsewhere online have suggested not only a cover up but also allegations of a "cyber" attack or other concerns about how these incidents unfolded. Iran alleged a cyber attack harmed Shahid Rajaei port in May, in the wake of an Iranian cyber attack on Israel...*

*It appears that Iran's messaging is directed at the international community as well as for internal consumption to allay concerns that something very bad is happening in Iran. Iranians consume media reports and the public has been on edge for a year due to sanctions and protests last year*

*that saw the government kill some 1,500 people and shut down the Internet. Protesters have been angered at Tehran's insistence at plowing money into weapons programs rather than local social programs. Explosions at Natanz and the missile facility at Khojir will lead to questions among the public.*

Those explosions highlight the continuing work being done at the uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and the missile plant at Khojir, reminding Iran's public of the huge amounts of money still being spent on developing weapons, including nuclear warheads and precision-guided missiles.

*This leaves us with three mysterious incidents and no clear answer as to how they are linked. The Khojir explosion was shown to be falsely linked to Parchin when in fact it was likely at a ballistic missile site linked to important industrial groups that built Iran's solid- and liquid-fueled missiles. What we can see on the surface however is just a burned patch of earth. It may be that whatever exploded has deeper roots underground. Some of these sites appear nondescript on the surface – just a warehouse or shed – while they are actually more important than they seem.*

*What is clear is that Iran has attempted to admit and showcase these incidents rather than hide them. This appears to be a concerted effort to try to pretend that it is hiding nothing, such that US officials or others cannot point to these sites after the event and show the explosions as evidence Iran is up to something nefarious. Asked about the explosion at Khojir, for instance, US-Iran envoy Brian Hook was non-committal on a visit to Israel.*

*Tehran will be quick to try to move these stories off the front page. Having "admitted" that nothing important happened, it will then go on to highlight other regional issues, such as the Houthis fighting Saudi Arabia or Hamas "resisting" Israel. Any suggestion that three incidents in*

*Iran in a week are linked can be brushed aside by Tehran as saying they had already been investigated and commented upon.*

Iran is telling its own people, and the Western world, “not to worry, huge gas tank explosions at missile bases and uranium enrichment plants happen all the time. If there were anything to worry about, we’d certainly let you know. And as you can see from our photos, there was only minor damage – a shed or two burned up. As for claims by some analysts that our photos are deceptive, for they appear to deliberately hide possible damage to facilities underground, just look at again at our evidence. All the damage appears right on the surface. We have no interest in doctoring our photos. We have no desire to hide anything from you. If we thought we had been the victims of an attack by the Great or Little Satan, when we’ve done nothing to either, we wouldn’t want to hide it. We’d want the whole world to know.”

So who are you going to believe? Behrouz Kamalvandi of Iran’s Atomic Energy Commission, at his most deeply sincere, or your lying eyes?

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