

Iran RAMPS UP uranium enrichment amid fears of nuclear weapons use - '300 tons by 2025'

IRAN is preparing to ramp up its production of 'yellowcake', a precursor to the enriched uranium used in both nuclear power and nuclear weapons, in the latest sign of Tehran's plans to step up its atomic activities.



Iran news: 30 tons of uranium 'yellowcake' has been shipped for processing (Image: GETTY IMAGES)

The Islamic Republic this week shipped 30 tons of yellowcake, or uranium ore, to a processing facility in the city of Isfahan, according to Iranian state media. The material can be further processed into enriched uranium which can be used as nuclear fuel or refined further to provide material for nuclear bombs. Tehran insists it plans to use its uranium in power plants but the West fears nuclear weapons may be the Islamic State's ultimate goal.

Iran's head of atomic energy said production of yellowcake will be ramped up to more than 300 tons annually "in the next five to six years", the semi-official Fars News Agency reported.

The announcement comes at a time of heightened tensions between Iran and the US which began when President Donald Trump abruptly quit a 2015 nuclear accord aimed at preventing Tehran from acquiring atomic weapons.

Mr Trump branded the pact “the worst deal in history” and insisted Iran had been violating its terms despite UN observers stating Tehran was in compliance.

Under the deal, Iran is allowed to enrich uranium to 3.67 percent – well below the 90 percent needed to produce a nuclear weapon – in exchange for sanctions relief.



Iran insists it only plans to use its enriched uranium for fuel in nuclear power plants (Image: (Getty Images))

However Washington decided to withdraw from the accord in May 2018 and reimpose sanctions.

Mr Trump this week warned that Iran remains “a source of potential danger and conflict” despite the US intelligence community concluding that Tehran has lived up to its side of the deal.

Addressing US lawmakers, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats said: “We do not believe Iran is currently undertaking activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device.”

However President Trump later disputed this, tweeting: “They are testing Rockets (last week) and more, and are coming very close to the edge.”



Yellowcake can be refined much further to produce material for nuclear weapons (Image: GETTY IMAGES)



Donald Trump pulled the US out of the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 (Image: GETTY IMAGES)

Mr Trump went on to suggest that his intelligence officials “should go back to school”.

Meanwhile, Britain, France and Germany have launched a trade mechanism to bypass US sanctions on Iran.

It is hoped the long-awaited special payment system will help salvage the 2015 nuclear deal, which Tehran said it would only comply with if efforts were made to allow Iran to trade with European companies.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Javad Zarif welcomed the news as a “long overdue first step” while Washington warned the EU against trying to sidestep its sanctions.

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