

U.N. Nuclear Chief:

Deal With Iran Reached On Probe

BY GEORGE JAHN
Associated Press

VIENNA — Despite some remaining differences, a deal has been reached with Iran that will allow the U.N. nuclear agency to restart a long-stalled probe into suspicions that Tehran has secretly worked on developing nuclear arms, the U.N. nuclear chief said Tuesday.

The news from International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano, who returned from Tehran on Tuesday, comes just a day before Iran and six world powers meet in Baghdad for negotiations and could present a significant turning point in the heated dispute over Iran's nuclear intentions. The six nations hope the talks will result in an agreement by the Islamic Republic to stop enriching uranium to a higher level that could be turned quickly into the fissile core of nuclear arms.

There was a possibility that the conference may be delayed by weather. A sand storm closed down Baghdad's airport's Tuesday.

Iran insists its nuclear program is only for power and medical applications, not weapons.

On Tuesday, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported that Iranian scientists had inserted a domestically made fuel rod, which contains pellets of 20 percent enriched uranium, into the core of a research nuclear reactor in Tehran.

The advance would be another step in achieving proficiency in the entire nuclear fuel cycle. Iran said in January that it had

produced the first nuclear fuel rod, and that it had to find a way to make them because Western sanctions prohibit their purchase from foreign markets.

By compromising on the IAEA probe, Iranian negotiators in Baghdad could argue that the onus was now on the other side to show some flexibility and temper its demands. Although Amano's trip and the talks in Baghdad are formally separate, Iran hopes progress with the IAEA can boost its chances in pressing the U.S. and Europe to roll back sanctions that have hit Iran's critical oil exports and blacklisted the country from international banking networks.

It was unclear, though, how far the results achieved by Amano would serve that purpose, with him returning without the two sides signing the deal, despite his upbeat comments.

After talks in Tehran between Amano and chief Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, "the decision was made ... to reach agreement" on the mechanics of giving the IAEA access to sites, scientists and documents it seeks to restart its probe," Amano told reporters at Vienna airport after his one-day trip to Tehran.

Amano said differences existed on "some details," without elaborating but added that Jalili had assured him that these "will not be an obstacle to reach agreement." He spoke of "an almost clean text" that will be signed soon, although he could not say when.

Western diplomats are skeptical of Iran's willingness to open past and present activities to full perusal, believing it would only reveal what they suspect and Tehran denies —

that the Islamic Republic has researched and developed components of a nuclear weapons program. They say that Tehran's readiness to honor any agreement it has signed is the true test of its willingness to cooperate

The United States is among those skeptics. In a statement released soon after Amano's announcement, Robert A. Wood, America's chief delegate to the nuclear agency, said Washington appreciated Amano's efforts but remained "concerned by the urgent obligation for Iran to take concrete steps to cooperate fully with the verification efforts of the IAEA, based on IAEA verification practices."

"We urge Iran to take this opportunity to resolve all outstanding concerns about the nature of its nuclear program," said the statement. "Full and transparent cooperation with the IAEA is the first logical step."

German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle also urged Iran to put professed good intentions into action.

"Enduring and substantial cooperation by Iran with the International Atomic Energy Agency to clear up the open questions surrounding the Iranian nuclear program would be an important and at the same time overdue step in the right direction," he said in a statement.

On the Baghdad talks, "the aim is to make progress not just atmospherically but also on substance," he said, reflecting Western views that the feel-good effect achieved at a previous round in Istanbul last month must now be built upon with concrete steps aimed at reducing international concerns over Tehran's nuclear agenda.

Commercial Spacecraft Off To Space Station

BY MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — Opening a new, entrepreneurial era in spaceflight, a ship built by a billionaire businessman sped toward the International Space Station with a load of groceries and other supplies Tuesday after a spectacular, middle-of-the-night blastoff.

The launch of the Falcon 9 rocket and its unmanned Dragon capsule marked the first time a commercial spacecraft has been sent to the orbiting outpost.

Cutting a brilliant, fiery arc through the darkness, the rocket lifted off just before 4 a.m. and smoothly boosted the capsule into orbit. The capsule is expected to rendezvous with the space station within days, delivering a half-ton of provisions for its six crew members.

It is considered just a test flight — in fact, the capsule was packed with only nonessential items, in case something went disastrously wrong — but if all goes well with this mission and others like it, commercial spacecrafts could be carrying astronauts to and from the space station in three to five years.

"Falcon flew perfectly!" billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk, founder of the SpaceX company, said via Twitter. "Feels like a giant weight just came off my back."

Musk later told reporters: "For us, it's like winning the Super Bowl."

Up to now, flights to the space station were something only major governments had done.

The White House offered congratulations.

"Every launch into space is a thrilling event, but this one is especially exciting," said John Hol-



A Falcon 9 rocket carrying the Dragon spacecraft blasts off, Tuesday, May 22, 2012, from Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. SpaceX is the first private company to build a rocket for a mission to the International Space Station.

pecially exciting," said John Hol-

dren, President Barack Obama's chief science adviser. "This expanded role for the private sector will free up more of NASA's resources to do what NASA does best — tackle the most demanding technological challenges in space, including those of human

spaceflight beyond low-Earth orbit."

NASA is looking to the private sector to take over flights to the space station now that the space shuttle has been retired. Several U.S. companies are vying for the opportunity.

"The significance of this day

cannot be overstated," said a beaming NASA Administrator Charles Bolden. "It's a great day for America. It's actually a great day for the world because there are people who thought that we had gone away, and today says, 'No, we're not going away at all.'"

Flight controllers applauded when the Dragon reached orbit nine minutes into the flight. Then they embraced once the solar panels on the craft popped open. Many of the SpaceX controllers wore untucked T-shirts, jeans or shorts, a stark contrast to NASA's suit-and-tie shuttle crowd.

A previous launch attempt, on Saturday, was aborted with a half-second left in the countdown because of a bad valve in one of Falcon's nine engines.

Another important test comes Thursday when the Dragon draws close to the space station. It will undergo practice maneuvers from more than a mile out. If all goes well, docking will occur on Friday. Musk will preside from the company's Mission Control in Hawthorne, Calif.

Since the shuttle's retirement last summer, American astronauts have been hitching rides to the space station aboard Russian rockets, and Russian, Japanese and European ships have been delivering supplies.

SpaceX has spent more than \$1 billion on the project.

Musk, the 40-year-old entrepreneur who helped create PayPal and runs the electric car company Tesla Motors, has poured in millions of his own fortune, and NASA has contributed \$381 million in seed money in a venture that has been likened to the public-private collaboration that built the Internet and won the West.

Joplin Remembers Deadly Tornado, 1 Year Later

BY ALAN SCHER ZAGIER
Associated Press

JOPLIN, Mo. — Carrying small American flags and wearing T-shirts bearing the names of friends and loved ones who died when a massive tornado tore through Joplin one year ago, thousands of people made a somber march Tuesday through some of the town's hardest-hit neighborhoods.

Residents and officials are dedicated to remembering their losses but are also committed to what is certain to be a long, slow recovery from a tornado that killed 161 people and injured hundreds of others. The storm last May wiped away entire neighborhoods in the city of 50,000, destroyed Joplin's only public high school and left behind a ghastly moonscape of block after city block of foundations wiped clean of their structures.

"It's been a roller-coaster type year. Extremely high highs and lots of low lows," said Debbie Fort, the principal of Erving Elementary School, which has been operating out of temporary facilities.

"It's important that we take a moment to reflect and remember," she said. "But it's a new chapter in our lives. This really

signifies our future, the future of Joplin."

Signs of the challenges ahead were plentiful on the 4-mile "Walk of Unity," from the glaring absence of century-old trees in the city's central neighborhoods to the ghostly shell of St. John's Regional Medical Center, which formed a stark backdrop at a late afternoon memorial service marked by a moment of silence at 5:41 p.m. — the exact time the tornado hit.

"There is not a handbook out there that says, 'Here's how you develop a community that has an 8-mile-long, 25 to 30 city-block wide swath of area that has basically lost everything,'" said David Wallace, a Texas developer whose firm was hired by the city to oversee Joplin's rebuilding plan. He estimated the recovery will cost nearly \$2 billion, about half of which has already been pledged by private sources.

Throughout the day, residents, hospital workers, volunteers and politicians gathered across the disaster zone to mark the May 22, 2011, tornado, mixing somber remembrances with steely resolutions to rebuild.

"It is so fitting to begin this day, this anniversary, by reflecting on our faith as dawn breaks over a renewed Joplin," Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon said at a sunrise service at Freeman Hospital,

which is eight blocks from St. John's but was undamaged. "Scripture tells us that the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day."

The afternoon procession started in neighboring Duquesne, where more than one-fourth of the community's 750 homes were destroyed and nine people died. The Joplin portion of the walk began past a Wal-Mart where three people were killed and 200 survived by huddling together in employee break rooms, bathrooms and other designated safe zones.

City officials estimated the number of people who took the somber walk at 5,000 to 6,000. They ended at Cunningham Park, which has been rebuilt and is across the street from what is left of the St. John's hospital.

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The medical center hasn't yet been torn down because it sits atop the mining tunnels that made Joplin an early 20th century boomtown. The hospital has been operating out of a succession of temporary facilities while construction continues at its new permanent location, where it will reopen under the name Mercy Hospital Joplin.

Along the route, some residents sat in lawn chairs and beneath shade umbrellas outside their partially rebuilt homes, offering bottled water to the walkers.

The unity walk featured several stops, including a groundbreaking ceremony for the rebuilt Joplin High. Juniors and seniors will spend the next two years attending school in a converted department store in the city's sole shopping mall.

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Images Show N. Korea Upgrading Launch Site

WASHINGTON (AP) — Satellite imagery shows North Korea is upgrading its old launch site in the secretive country's northeast to handle larger rockets, like space launch vehicles and intercontinental missiles, a U.S. institute claimed Tuesday.

The U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies said the upgrade of the Musudan-ri site began last summer and reflects North Korean determination to expand its rocket program.

The U.S. and other nations are worried such rockets could be developed to deliver nuclear weapons.

North Korea on Tuesday vowed to push ahead with its nuclear program because of what it called U.S. hostility. The international community is pressuring North Korea to refrain from conducting what would be its third nuclear test, following a failed attempt in mid-April to launch a satellite into space.

That launch, using its biggest rocket to date, the Unha-3, was from more sophisticated site at Sohae on the country's northwestern coast.

Army Being More Selective On Recruits

WASHINGTON (AP) — Uncle Sam may not want you after all. In sharp contrast to the peak years of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the Army last year took in no recruits with misconduct convictions or drug or alcohol issues, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press. And soldiers already serving on active duty now must meet tougher standards to stay on for further tours in uniform.

The Army is also spending hundreds of thousands of dollars less in bonuses to attract recruits or entice soldiers to remain.

It's all part of an effort to slash the size of the active duty Army from about 570,000 at the height of the Iraq war to 490,000 by 2017. The cutbacks began last year, and as of the end of March the Army was down to less than 558,000 troops.

For a time during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Army lowered its recruiting standards, raising the number of recruits who entered the Army with moral, medical and criminal — including felony — waivers.

Hezbollah Appeals For Calm After Kidnappings

BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of Lebanon's Shiite militant group Hezbollah appealed for calm Tuesday after people blocked roads and burned tires in Beirut to protest the kidnapping of 11 Lebanese Shiites in neighboring Syria.

The abductions in Syria's northern Aleppo province threatened to ignite dangerous sectarian tensions and fueled fears that Lebanon is getting drawn into the chaos next door.

The Lebanese were on their way home from a religious pilgrimage in Iran when Syrian rebels intercepted their vehicles, Syria's state-run SANA news agency said. The rebels abducted the 11 men and a Syrian driver. The women were released.

Lebanese security officials confirmed the kidnapping.

As the news of the kidnappings spread, residents of the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Shiite area, took to the streets and burned tires and blocked roads in protest. The leader of Hezbollah, a strong ally of the Syrian regime, appealed for calm and warned his followers against revenge attacks targeting Syrians.

Colin Powell Declines To Endorse Obama

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Secretary of State Colin Powell declined Tuesday to renew the presidential endorsement he gave Barack Obama four years ago, saying he wasn't ready "to throw my weight behind someone" at this time.

The former chairman of the military's Joint Chiefs of Staff and Cabinet member under President George W. Bush demurred when asked if he was backing Obama again. A longtime GOP figure, Powell caused a stir in Republican political circles four years ago by endorsing Obama over war hero Sen. John McCain, calling Obama a "transformational figure."

Not so this time, Powell said on NBC's "Today" show. At least, not yet.

"It's not just a matter of whether you support Obama or (Mitt) Romney. It's who they have coming in with them," he said.

Pressed to say why he was holding back on giving Obama his blessing a second time, Powell said: "I always keep my powder dry, as they say in the military."

Man Accused Of Serial Stabbings Convicted

FLINT, Mich. (AP) — A drifter accused of terrorizing a struggling city by faking car trouble then stabbing strangers who came to his aid was quickly convicted of murder Tuesday after jurors rejected an insanity defense.

It was the first trial for Elias Abuelazam, who is accused of a series of often fatal stabbings in Michigan and two other states that began almost immediately after his arrival in Flint in May 2010.

After an eight-day trial, jurors took just a few hours to return a verdict in the death of Arnold Minor, a 49-year-old handyman stabbed after midnight near downtown Flint two summers ago. Members of the victim's family sat in the front row clutching a box with his cremated remains. The attack was one of 14 in the Flint area linked to Abuelazam — five people died — although the Israeli immigrant is not charged in every incident.

"It's been 658 days — I've been counting. He's going where he needs to be," Minor's sister, Stephanie Ward, said of Abuelazam's prison sentence. "He's not crazy."

Defense attorney Ed Zeineh barely mentioned the overwhelming evidence against Abuelazam during his closing argument and instead focused on his mental health, which dominated the end of the trial.

Mountain Lion Found, Killed In Santa Monica

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Police shot and killed a mountain lion that somehow made its way through an urban landscape before it was found early Tuesday in a downtown Santa Monica office building courtyard near an outdoor mall and a blufftop park that offers tourists views of the ocean and the city's famed pier.

Authorities made multiple attempts to try and subdue the young male cat, including use of a tranquilizer and a pepper ball, before killing it, said Capt. Daniel Sforza of the state Fish and Game Department.

The mountain lion was found about 6 a.m. by a janitor in the courtyard near a popular open-air mall, the Third Street Promenade, and just a couple of blocks from the beach. The street that has a preschool, a church and other businesses was cordoned off as a precaution.

"It's not a risk we can take with public safety," said police Lt. Robert Almada.

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