Countries Don’t Report Iran Sanctions Violations, UN Report Says

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United Nations monitors said governments reported no new incidents of Iran violating Security Council sanctions against its nuclear program, even though some have unfolded in plain sight.

“The current situation with reporting could reflect a general reduction of procurement activities by the Iranian side or a political decision by some member states to refrain from reporting to avoid a possible negative impact on ongoing negotiations” between Iran and six world powers, said a panel of experts for the UN committee on Iran sanctions in its latest report, dated June 1 and made public Tuesday.

While the panel found that Iran “implemented its commitments” under an interim framework easing economic sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear activities, the report raised questions about whether countries, including the U.S. and its European allies, have looked the other way on some sanctions violations.

No country reported that General Qassem Suleimani, commander of the elite Quds force of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, violated a UN-mandated travel ban despite “a number of media reports with photographs and videos” showing him in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, “reportedly organizing and training militia and regular forces in those countries.” The report included examples of such photos.

The report provides fresh ammunition for critics, including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and members of both parties in the U.S. Congress who say that President Barack Obama and America’s allies are too eager for a deal with Iran. The Islamic Republic, they say, is likely to cheat on any nuclear accord reached in negotiations that face a self-imposed June 30 deadline.

‘Whitewash’ of Violations

“This is a clear political decision not to publicize these examples of sanctions evasion in order to ensure that public reporting on this doesn’t in any way jeopardize the talks or harden congressional resolve,” Mark Dubowitz, executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, who has advised Congress on expanding sanctions, said in an interview. “The Obama administration has bent over backwards to try and whitewash Iranian violations both on the nuclear side and also on the sanction-busting side.”

While Iran unveiled no new types of ballistic missiles and is keeping its uranium enrichment below an agreed-upon threshold, the panel said that the U.K. on April 20 reported that Iran has an active nuclear procurement network linked to two blacklisted firms.

One country that wasn’t named also reported that Iran tried to import a nuclear compressor illegally, the panel said, adding that it didn’t have enough time to investigate the information for this report.

Two unnamed governments informed the panel that Iran was carrying out nuclear procurement-related financial transactions through banks outside Iran that aren’t under sanctions. Iranian businessmen acquired majority shares in one of the banks in 2011, according to the report.