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The IAEA's MOSAIC weapon:

Predictive espionage and the war on Iran

Backed by US funding and Palantir's AI tools, the IAEA turned its Iran inspections into a surveillance regime that blurred the line between monitoring and military targeting.
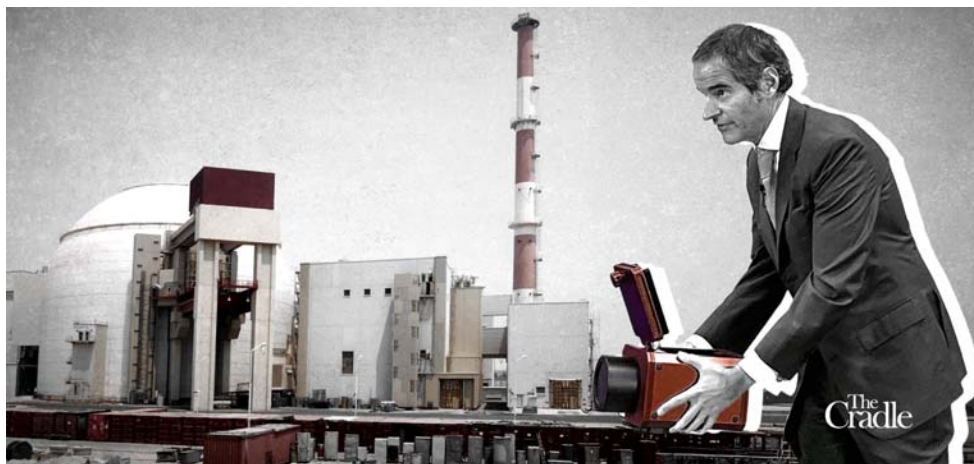
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Ever since Israel launched its [illegal war of aggression](#) against Iran on 13 June, speculation has swirled around the role played by MOSAIC – a tool created by shadowy spy-tech firm Palantir.

This software has been deeply embedded within the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) operations, particularly its "safeguarding" mission: inspections and monitoring state compliance with non-proliferation agreements.

MOSAIC has been central to this work for a decade and was quietly integrated by former US president Barack Obama's administration into the July 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal with Iran.

Espionage disguised as oversight

The deal granted IAEA inspectors unfettered access to Iran's nuclear facilities to confirm the absence of a nuclear weapons program. In the process, the agency accumulated an immense trove of data: surveillance imagery, sensor measurements, facility documents – all of which were fed into MOSAIC's predictive system.

Yet the software's pivotal role in the deal remained concealed until a *Bloomberg exposé* in May 2018, just days before US President Donald Trump, during his first term, unilaterally tore up the agreement and launched Washington's so-called "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

Despite Trump tearing up the deal, inspections of Iranian nuclear facilities continued, as did MOSAIC's monitoring of Tehran's nuclear program. As *Bloomberg* noted, Palantir's technology helped the IAEA scrutinize vast swaths of information from disparate sources, including 400 million "digital objects" globally, such as "social media feeds and satellite photographs inside Iran" – a capability that "raised concern the IAEA may overstep the boundary between nuclear monitoring and intelligence-gathering."

The *Bloomberg* piece also provided fodder for an oft-stated Iranian concern that Mosaic was helping Israelis track Iranian scientists for assassination:

"The tool is at the analytical core of the agency's new $50 million MOSAIC platform, turning databases of classified information into maps that help inspectors visualize ties between the people, places and material involved in nuclear activities, IAEA documents show."

Bloomberg quoted the head of a British company that "advises governments on verification issues" on the hazards of false data being fed into MOSAIC, "either by accident or design":

"You will generate a false return if you add a false assumption into the system without making the appropriate qualifier …You'll end up convincing yourself that shadows are real."

The underlying and ongoing concern for Tehran is that MOSAIC is heavily influenced by Palantir's "predictive-policing software." Employed by many law enforcement agencies across the western world at enormous expense, this technology is highly controversial and has been found to exhibit dangerous, misleading biases, leading to erroneous "pre-crime" interventions.

Indeed, *MIT Technology Review* has flat-out called for the dismantlement of predictive tech in a report that looks at how dangerous the technology has been in analyzing even domestic criminal data:

"Lack of transparency and biased training data mean these tools are not fit for purpose. If we can't fix them, we should ditch them."

Given the inclusion of dubious intelligence – such as the Mossad-stolen Iranian nuclear archive, openly celebrated by the Israeli agency for its deception – it is highly probable that such corrupted data triggered unjustified inspections. *Bloomberg* quoted a negotiator who helped craft the 2015 deal, expressing concern over how "dirty or unstructured data" could lead to "a flurry of unnecessary snap inspections."

Palantir's software specifically helped the IAEA "plan and justify unscheduled probes" – at least 60 of these conducted until US-Israeli strikes put an end to inspections.

Data as a weapon

On 31 May, the IAEA released a report suggesting Iran may still be developing nuclear weapons. Although it presented no new evidence, its dubious charges related "to activities dating back decades" at three sites where, purportedly, until the early 2000s, "undeclared nuclear material" was handled.

Its findings prompted the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors to charge Iran as "in breach of its non-proliferation obligations" on 12 June, providing Tel Aviv with a propaganda pretext for its illegal attack the next day.

On 17 June, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi conceded that the agency had "no proof of a systematic effort to move into a nuclear weapon" by Tehran. Still, the damage was done. Iranian lawmakers, citing the IAEA's secret sharing of sensitive data with Tel Aviv and Grossi's covert collusion with Israeli officials, suspended all cooperation with the agency.

This may be the wisest course for other states under IAEA scrutiny. MOSAIC is now so entwined with the agency's daily function that any country targeted for regime change could find itself accused of nuclear ambitions based on manufactured evidence.

A 2017 IAEA document reveals MOSAIC is comprised of "over 20 different software development projects." Launched in May 2015, it was hoped to revolutionize "safeguarding" the world over.

The report described MOSAIC as providing inspectors with "a suite of tools with which to face the challenges of tomorrow." For instance, the Electronic Verification Package (EVP) enables field data – including planning, reporting, and review – to be automatically collected

and processed. When inspectors visit a facility, they record vast amounts of information – instantly analyzed at headquarters via EVP.

Elsewhere, the Collaborative Analysis Platform (CAP) enables deep cross-referencing of internal and open-source data, including overhead imagery. It supports the IAEA's core safeguarding processes: "planning, information collection and analysis, verification, and evaluation."

CAP gives the IAEA "the capability to search, collect, and integrate multiple data and information sources to enable comprehensive analysis." An IAEA official quoted in the document declared the platform represented "a major leap forward in analytics" and "a game changer", allowing the IAEA to collect "a much greater amount of information, and also analyze that information in greater depth than before."

Such analytical capacity grants inspectors "the ability to establish relationships between information from multiple sources, across time," and "make sense out of huge amounts of data."

CAP also assists in the collection and evaluation of open-source information. The document noted the platform could "process much more open-source information than the Department currently has capacity for," and lets staff "search information across the entire repository; carefully cross-check different types of information; and utilize information in visual formats," such as "overhead imagery."

'Extra-budgetary contributions' from the US government

All of this intelligence is highly sensitive and would be a treasure trove for states intent on military action against nations in the IAEA's crosshairs. According to the 2017 report, inspectors spent 13,248 days in the field in 2015 and inspected 709 nuclear facilities. Those figures have since grown. All the while, MOSAIC – a little-known tool for the "early detection of the misuse of nuclear material or technology" – has remained operational.

The report noted that MOSAIC was financed through the IAEA's regular budget, the Major Capital Investment Fund, and "extra-budgetary contributions." Its cost at the time was around €41 million (approximately \$44.15 million) – almost 10 percent of the agency's total annual budget. The source and size of those extra-budgetary contributions remain vague, perhaps deliberately, but a Congressional Research Service briefing note indicates Washington formally funds the IAEA to the tune of over \$100 million annually.

Moreover, the US consistently provides in excess of \$90 million in extra-budgetary contributions every year. In other words, almost half of the IAEA's budget flows from Stateside, suggesting MOSAIC was created wholly on Washington's dime.

The timing of its rollout – two months prior to the Obama administration's nuclear deal being agreed – could further indicate it was explicitly funded with Iran in mind. As then-IAEA director general Yukiya Amano revealed in March 2018, the association's penetration of Tehran was unprecedented.

At a press conference, Amano referred to the IAEA's nuclear "verification regime" in Iran as "the world's most robust." The organization's inspectors spent "3,000 calendar days per year on the ground" in the country, capturing "hundreds of thousands of images captured daily by our sophisticated surveillance cameras," which was "about half of the total number of such images that we collect throughout the world."

In all, "over one million pieces of open source information" were collected by the IAEA monthly.

The IAEA's fixation on Iran, coupled with suspicions that it provided the names of nuclear scientists – later assassinated by Israel – raises the question: Was the 2015 deal always an industrial-scale espionage operation designed to prepare for war?

A wave of assassinations of nuclear scientists and IRGC commanders in the early stages of Tel Aviv's failed war on Iran appears to support that conclusion.

Iranian officials not only suspended cooperation with the IAEA and ordered the dismantlement of inspection cameras, but also rejected Grossi's request to visit bombed nuclear sites. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi branded the IAEA chief's insistence on visiting under the pretext of safeguards "meaningless and possibly even malign in intent."

What is clear is that any state still cooperating with the IAEA must now reckon with the possibility that it is not being monitored – it is being mapped for war.

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