

# Ken Timmerman

## Scientist: Pakistan Shared Bomb Materials With Iran

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**By:** Kenneth R. Timmerman

The self-styled father of Pakistan's "Islamic Bomb," A.Q. Khan, has told a Pakistani television interviewer that under his direction, Pakistan shared nuclear weapons material with the Islamic Republic of Iran.

"Iran was interested in acquiring nuclear technology. Since Iran was an important Muslim country, we wished Iran to acquire this technology," Khan told the interviewer from Aaj News Television.

"If Iran succeeds in acquiring nuclear technology, we will be a strong bloc in the region to counter international pressure," he added. "Iran's nuclear capability will neutralize Israel's power. We had advised Iran to contact the suppliers and purchase equipment from them."

The interview aired in Pakistan on Aug. 31 and was translated into English by the director of National Intelligence's Open Source Center and posted on Wednesday at "Secrecy News," a project of the Federation of American Scientists.

Khan explained that Pakistan set up a network of phony companies in Dubai for nuclear purchases and shared the network with Iran and Libya.

"It was a company with which we had established links when we could not receive the material from Europe. They were Sri Lankan Muslims," he said.

Khan also revealed that Pakistan built its first bomb and was ready to test it in 1984, but decided not to because of its close alliance with the United States to fight the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, who was Pakistan's president at the time, "argued that since the United States had to overlook our nuclear program due to our support in the Afghan war, it was an opportunity for us to further develop the program. They said the tests could be conducted any time later."

Pakistan didn't test its nuclear weapons until 1998, when it claims to have set off five nuclear explosions. Khan was publicly present during the tests.

Khan revealed that during her first stint as prime minister, from 1988-1990, Benazir Bhutto asked him to switch from producing high-enriched uranium (HEU), which has no other use than for nuclear weapons, to produce low-enriched uranium (LEU), which can also be used to make fuel for nuclear power plants.

During Bhutto's second government in 1994, Khan paid a visit to North Korea to purchase ballistic missile technology. In exchange, the North Koreans sent technical teams to the Kahuta plant, where Dr. Khan had set up Pakistan's enrichment plant.

"They would stay at a guest house in the vicinity of the Kahuta plant, because we did not have any other nuclear facility and our missiles were also being manufactured there," he said.

However, he insisted that under his direction no uranium enrichment technology was shared with North

Korea. "These are just accusations," he said. "[N]uclear technology cannot be learned by visiting a nuclear site and observing a few machines."

North Korea recently admitted publicly that it had an advanced uranium enrichment program that was now capable of producing weapons-grade fuel, confirming reports from 2002 when North Korean officials privately shared that information with a visiting State Department official but later denied it in public.

Pakistan's nuclear relationship with Iran was extensive, Khan said. He personally introduced the Iranians to his clandestine supply network. "The Iranian officials would meet them in Dubai. We had told the Iranians that the suppliers were very reliable."

He shared the same supplier network with the Libyans, Khan said. "Be it Libya, Iran, or Pakistan, the same suppliers were responsible for providing the material through the same third party in Dubai," he said.

Khan's role in Iran's nuclear programs first emerged into the public light in a brief news item carried in the Iranian state-run media in October 1987, which revealed that Iran's Atomic Energy Organization had signed a consulting contract with the AQ Khan Laboratories in Pakistan.

I reported on that contract, and Khan's many trips to Iran as part of that contract in "Countdown to Crisis: the Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran" in 2005, noting that for two decades, the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna "simply turned a blind eye to his activities."

To read about "Countdown to Crisis" [go here now](#).

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner today accused the IAEA of covering up an appendix to its latest report on Iran that described clandestine Iranian nuclear activities indicating that Iran was engaged in nuclear weapons work.

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