U.N. PANEL FLAGS SCOPE OF IRAN’S BANNED ARMS ACQUISITIONS
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U.N. analysts said an apparent drop in Iran's arms-usable imports may mean Tehran is hiding banned acquisitions with growing success, Reuters reports.

The development may alternately reflect a slowdown in Iran's efforts to obtain atomic and missile components in breach of international sanctions, says an unreleased U.N. Panel of Experts assessment described in a Monday news article. The drop-off in detected procurement attempts coincides with a series of multilateral discussions intended to defuse fears that Tehran's atomic activities are geared toward nuclear-arms development.

The document highlights an "ongoing" panel investigation of titanium tubes found hidden inside steel piping sent from China to Iran. The analysis notes no specific atomic uses for the components, which were requested by the Iranian firm Ocean Lotka International Shipping and Forwarding.

The U.N. experts advised other nations to increase their scrutiny of intermediary companies, warning that Iran could tap such entities to hide the ultimate recipients and uses of prohibited technologies.

"In three cases inspected under the current mandate, names of freight forwarders were recorded on shipping documentation in the place of consignors or consignees," the document states.

The expert panel separately referenced a probe still in progress on possible steps to procure valves from Germany and India for use at Iran's Arak heavy-water reactor. Citing data from German prosecutors, the document says an Iranian company successfully obtained more than 65 percent of nearly 1,800 such components it is believed to have requested from 2007 to 2011.

The Iranian firm -- called Modern Industries Technique Company -- has been targeted by international penalties since 2010 over its work on the Arak facility. Iran has tentatively offered to alter the unopened reactor site to reduce its anticipated output of bomb-usable plutonium.

1 This article is available in electronic format at: http://bit.ly/1gjdh2l.