



New Activity at the Esfahan Nuclear Complex

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In recent days, vehicle activity on the road leading to the tunnel entrances at the Esfahan Nuclear Complex has increased notably, including at the southernmost tunnel entrance, which up until now saw only minimal activity. This most recent activity appears related to re-burying the southernmost and the middle entrances with soil. The northernmost tunnel entrance, which witnessed increased hardening over the last months, appears to remain open as of today and vehicles are present near the entrance. The extent to which activities are ongoing inside the tunnel is unknown, but Iran moving assets inside the tunnel rather than out seems plausible.

Further, astute observers have voiced concern about recent activity at a destroyed above-ground building within the Esfahan nuclear complex. Up until recently, the activities at the above-ground site appeared largely related to sorting and salvaging of rubble. However, Iran recently constructed a new roof on top of the surviving steel framework of a destroyed building. The reason is unclear but could indicate that Iran assessed the remaining structure is worth preserving. The original purpose of the destroyed building is unknown, but there are indications that it was related to centrifuge manufacturing. Absent clarity, this activity inevitably sparks concerns about Iran reconstituting its gas centrifuge program.

Activity at the Tunnel Entrances

Satellite imagery taken on January 24 and January 29, 2026, show new efforts by Iran to bury the middle and southernmost tunnel entrances with soil. On January 29, the door serving as entrance to the middle tunnel, as well as the entrance to the adjacent alcove, appeared fully blocked by dirt (see Figure 1). Figure 2 shows heaps of fresh soil outside the southernmost entrance as of January 24. A few days later, construction machinery was working outside the tunnel entrance. More dump trucks can be seen at a nearby staging area being filled with soil or waiting to be filled. A series of dump trucks loaded with soil can be seen on the road leading to the tunnel entrances, presumably to add more soil to the middle entrance. Increased vehicle presence on the road leading to the tunnel entrances was previously noted on January 24. See Figure 3.

The burial efforts indicate a preparation for additional military strikes, as was previously seen before American strikes were carried out during the 12 Day War. The current activity at the northernmost entrance, which Iran has hardened in recent months, including through the

addition of missile chicanes, is less evident. The entrance seems to remain open as of January 29 with vehicles present near the entrance, raising the question whether Iran is moving recovered assets from other sites into the tunnel. See Figure 4.

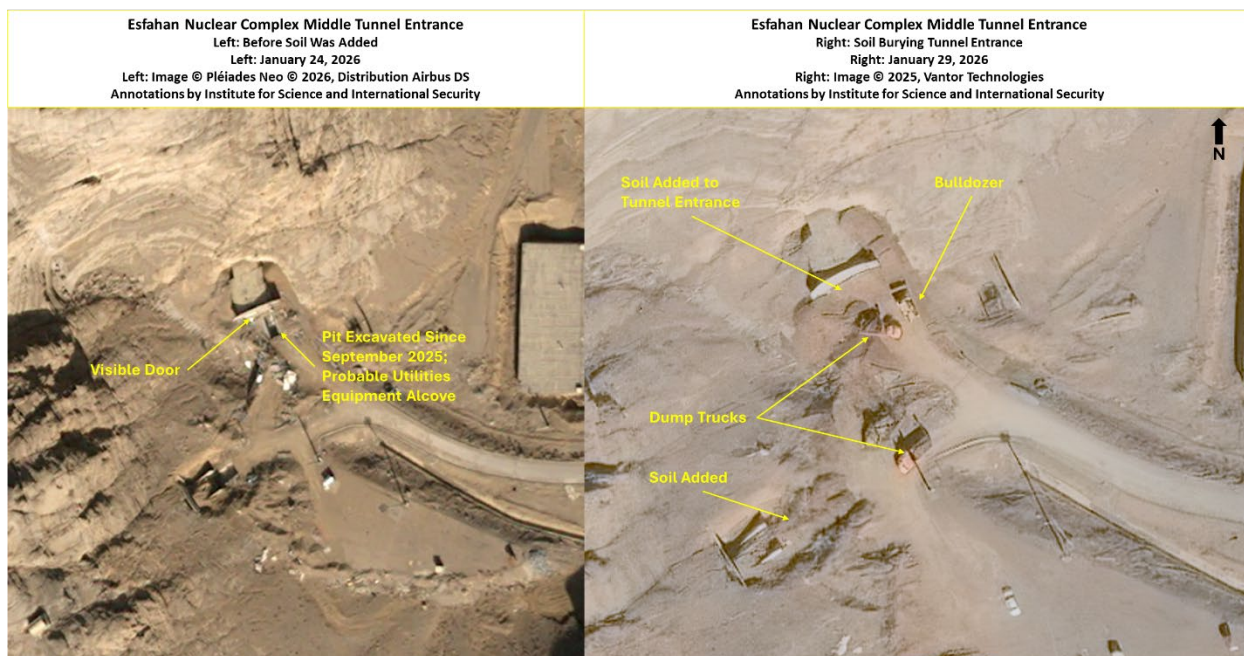


Figure 1. The door to the middle entrance was still visible on January 24 (left). As of January 29, the entrance is blocked by dirt (right).



Figure 2. Fresh soil heaps appeared outside of the southernmost entrance on January 24 (left). As of January 29, construction vehicles are further burying the tunnel entrance (right).



Figure 3. Several images showing vehicular activity on the roads to the tunnel entrances. The top image, taken January 29, shows six dump trucks filled with soil driving on the road leading towards the middle and northern tunnel entrances. Nearby is a staging area used to fill the dump trucks. The bottom image shows vehicles at the security checkpoint on the road to the northern and middle tunnel entrances a few days prior.



Figure 4. The northernmost tunnel entrance appears to remain open and vehicles are present near the entrance.

Activity at the Above-Ground Site

Satellite imagery taken in December 2025 and January 2026 show that over the last two months, Iran has repaired the metal framework and replaced the roof of one of the buildings destroyed by an Israeli air strike on June 20, 2025. Figure 5 shows the framework and the new roof as of January 17, 2026. No wall panels are installed as of January 22, at least along the visible south side of the building. Figure 6 shows the roof was added in stages, beginning in early December. Figure 6 also shows that while most of the rubble appears to have been cleared before the roof was added, two sections at each end of the annex and small portions of possible lower-level structures inside the main building remain.

The cleanup process began in early July with the clearing of the nearby streets to allow vehicular access. By mid-October, the debris and rubble inside the building and on top of the metal frame were largely removed. The clean-up efforts became more notable in early November when additional debris and rubble surrounding the building were further cleared, making way for reconstruction activities.

Assessed Purpose of the Destroyed Building

Although the building's purpose was not directly identified by the Israeli Defense Forces, there are multiple indications that the building was related to centrifuge manufacturing. While the building itself was constructed in the early 2000s, the annex was constructed in late 2020 (see Figure 7). This timeframe is early considering the IAEA did not notify of moving centrifuge manufacturing to Esfahan until early 2022, but nevertheless consistent. At the time, the Institute reported that the exact location for the manufacturing capabilities was unknown, but that repurposing one of the many existing buildings is reasonable.¹ The annex running along the entire length of the building, about half the height of the main building, mirrors an annex along a key building within the centrifuge manufacturing site at TESA/TABA near Karaj. The building at Karaj is believed to have produced bellows and/or rotor tubes for centrifuges and was attacked by drones in June 2021. Similar to the annex at Esfahan, it features two structures on the roof of the annex on one end which appear to be ducting probably related to ventilation. A notable difference is the dimension of the buildings, where the building at Esfahan is shorter, but wider (see Figure 8).

While the IDF did not identify a specific building, the IDF associated the area where the building was as housing centrifuge manufacturing, and it indicates that two separate buildings were involved in centrifuge manufacturing.² Figure 9 shows post-strike imagery published by the IDF, where the building discussed in this report are in the center.

It is plausible that the building adjacent to the one with the new roof was the second building indicated by the IDF. Following the attack on Karaj in June 2021, a drone cage was added around this adjacent building. This building was also expanded by an annex in the fall of 2020. As of January 2026, the building remains destroyed, but access had been cleared along the center axis of the building.

Meaning of Roof Construction

¹ David Albright, Sarah Burkhard, and Spencer Faragasso, "Where are Iran's new centrifuge manufacturing capabilities?," *Institute for Science and International Security*, February 15, 2022, <https://isis-online.org/isis-reports/where-are-irans-new-centrifuge-manufacturing-capabilities>.

² Press Briefing by IDF, June 21, 2025, <https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/israel-at-war/briefings-by-idf-spokesperson-bg-effie-defrin/june-25-press-briefings/press-briefing-by-idf-spokesperson-bg-effie-defrin-june-21-2025/#:~:text=Overnight%2C%20we%20deepened%20the%20strike,of%20developing%20a%20nuclear%20weapon>

The roof construction could mean that assets survived that Iran wanted to recover without overhead observation, or it could mean that Iran considers the structure worth retaining. In the case of reconstruction activities inside the buildings, the roof may serve a dual purpose of shielding construction from the weather and from prying eyes.

If this area was fully or largely dedicated to centrifuge manufacturing, the activity at this site, in combination with activities as the Esfahan mountain complex and the Pilot Fuel Enrichment Plant (PFEP) at Natanz, would indicate that Iran has placed a priority on recovering and preserving assets related to uranium enrichment rather than uranium conversion. Absent clarity, this activity inevitably raises worrisome questions about Iran reconstituting its gas centrifuge program.

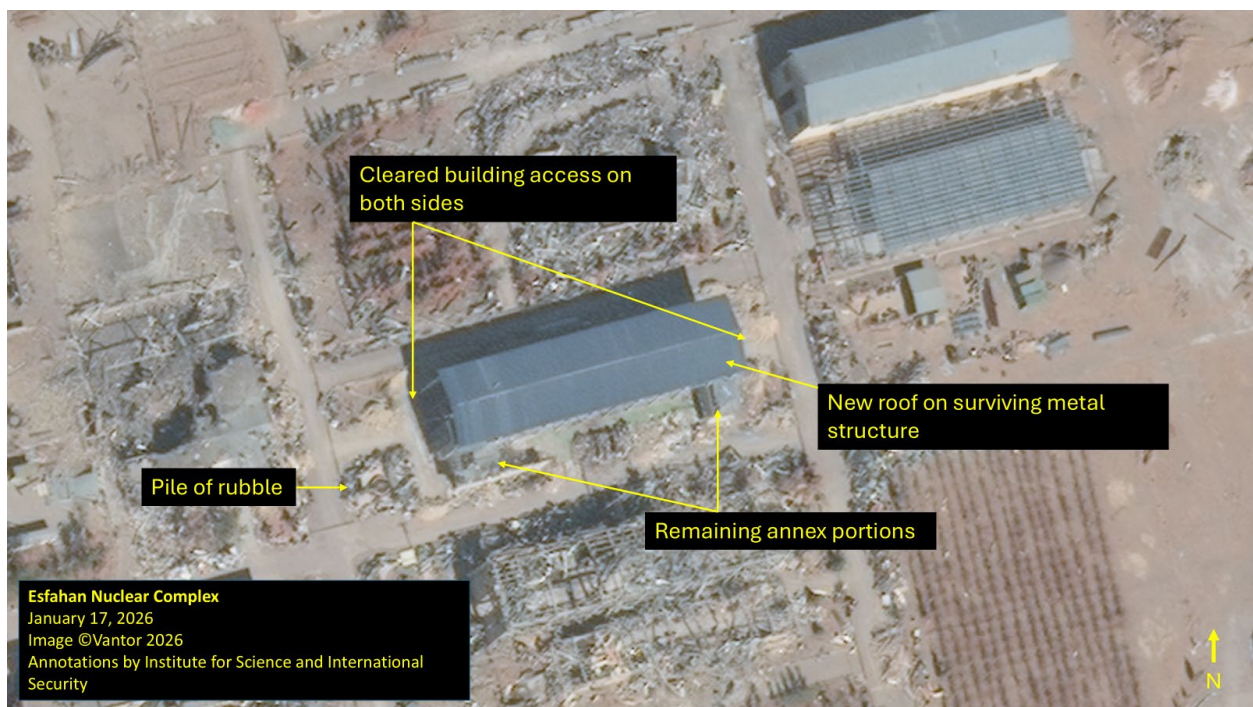


Figure 5. Iran constructed a new roof on the metal framework of a destroyed building at the Esfahan nuclear site.

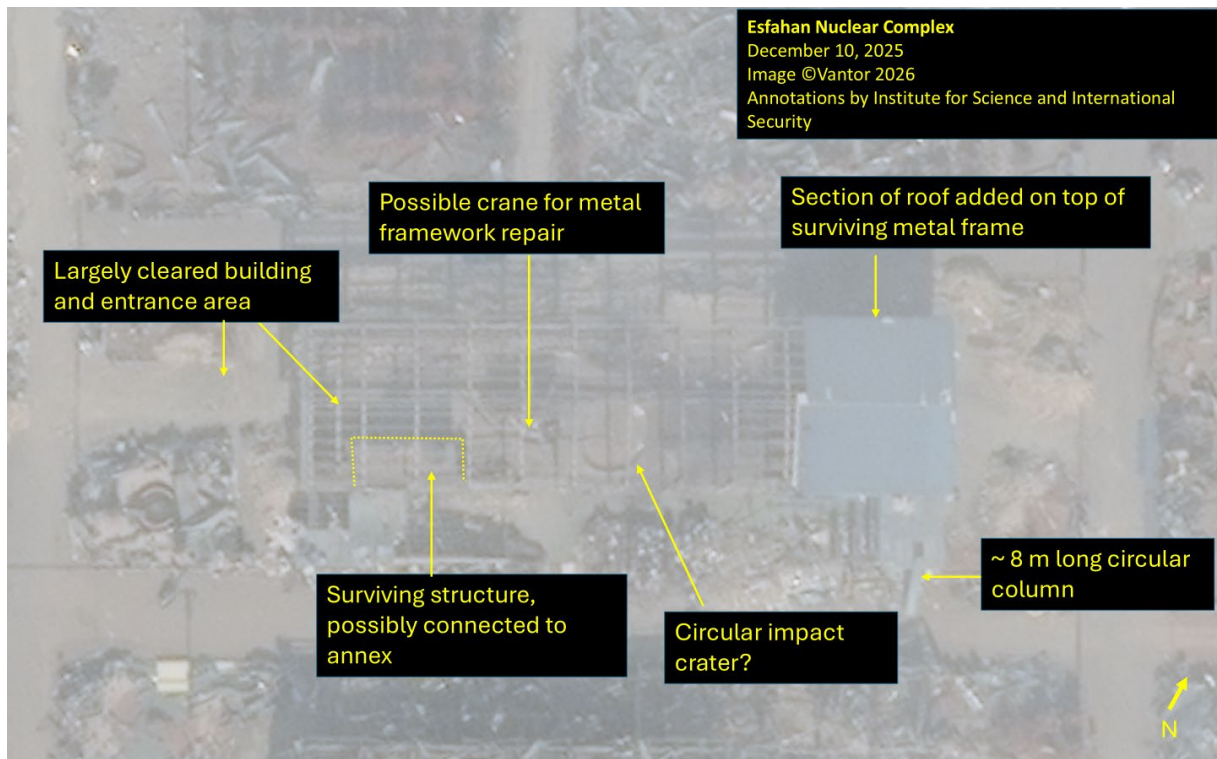
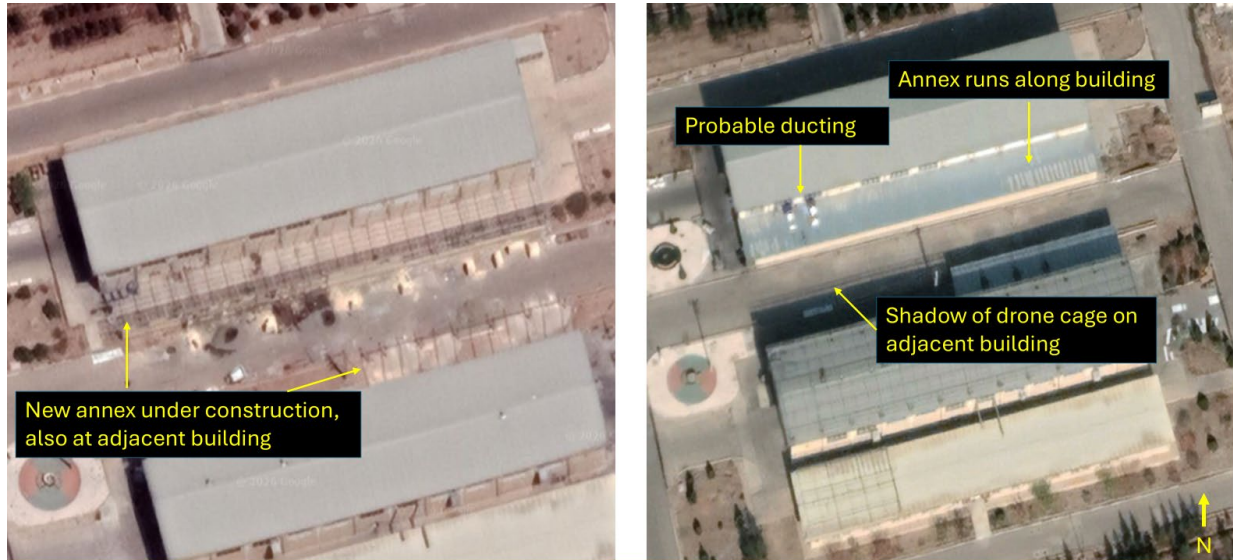


Figure 6. The building appeared to have been largely cleared of rubble before the surviving metal frame was repaired and a roof was added in stages.



Esfahan Nuclear Complex
Left: August 12, 2020. Image © Vantor 2026 via Google Earth; Right: December 1, 2022; Image ©Vantor 2026 via Google Earth
Annotations by Institute for Science and International Security

Figure 7. The building was expanded in the second half of 2020. The adjacent building was also expanded in that timeframe. The adjacent building received an anti-drone cage in 2022, after a drone attack on centrifuge manufacturing capabilities at Karaj.

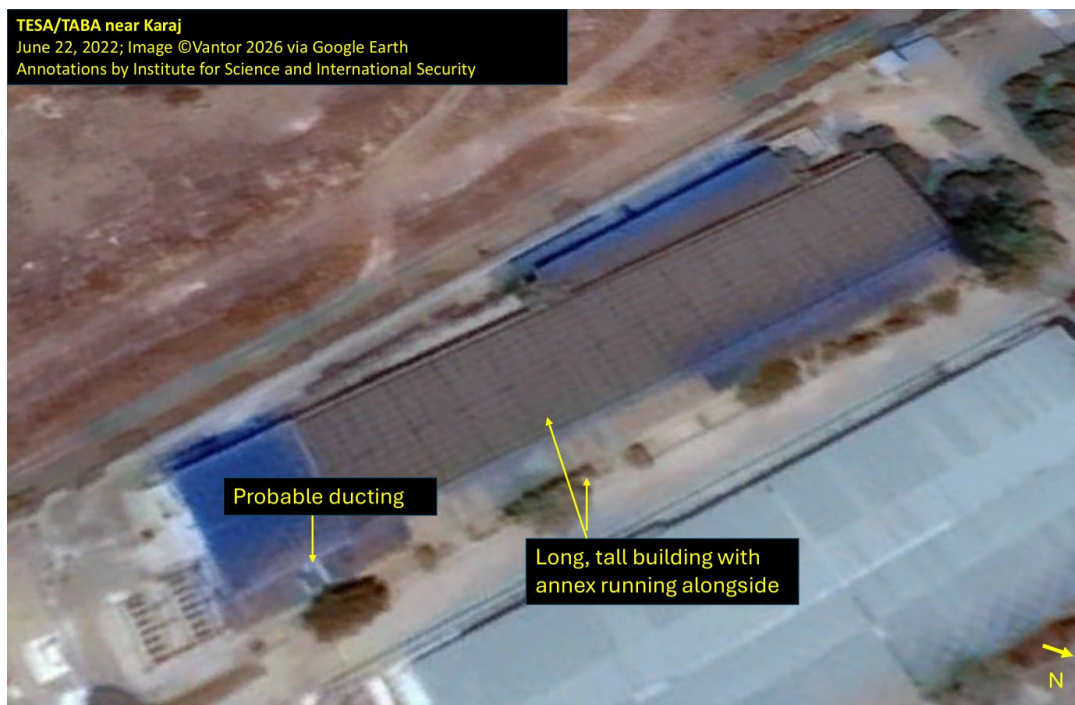


Figure 8. The building with the new roof has features similar to the building attacked in June 2021 at Karaj.



Figure 9. A side by side of the buildings at Esfahan before the strike and the post-strike image published by the IDF.