

## Brazil Seeks to Expand Its Nuclear Energy Program

In the most recent demonstration of its ambition to assume a more prominent international leadership role, Brazil is defending its right to operate a uranium enrichment plant, the *New York Times* reports.<sup>1</sup>

The Brazilian minister of science and technology, Eduardo Campos, touched off a brief controversy at the general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in September when he suggested that its inspectors would have only limited access to the nuclear fuel rod fabrication plant at Resende, near Rio de Janeiro. Campos later backtracked and published a statement on the ministry's website clarifying that the Brazilian government and the agency are working on an agreement to "(1) provide the necessary working conditions so that the IAEA can complete its mission; and (2) protect Brazilian technical and commercial secrets."<sup>2</sup>

The dispute comes at a time when controversy over Iran's nuclear production has highlighted a growing rift between signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Under its terms, participants have the right to develop their nuclear program as long as they are not used for weapons purposes. But many countries now charge that nuclear states have sought to deny them this opportunity while at the same time failing to comply with their own obligations for disarmament.

Brazil's delegate to the 2003 IAEA general conference, Ambassador Roberto Abdenur, argued that "the international community's concerns with respect to nonproliferation, safety, security and technical challenges facing nuclear power must always be addressed in a manner that fully takes into account the principles of universality, transparency, and the inalienable right of all countries and peoples to scientific and technological development, as well as to access the benefits of nuclear energy and its peaceful applications in all fields."<sup>3</sup>

Brazil is a member of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco. Campos reiterated the "peaceful vocation" of Brazil's nuclear program and its orientation toward health care, industrial, agricultural and energy applications.<sup>4</sup> According to *O Globo* newspaper, Brazil has the world's sixth largest uranium reserves and with further exploration could move up to third place.<sup>5</sup>

In a June 24 commentary in the *Washington Post*, former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft warned that the international community must beware of offering favorable treatment to Brazil in its nuclear program while cracking down on similar activities in Iran. "Acquiescing in the Brazilian enrichment program would have the effect of dividing nuclear power aspirants into good guys and bad," Scowcroft cautioned. "Put simply, the way Brazil is dealt with could prove to be one of the keys to dealing with the Iranian nuclear problem...We therefore should make the same offer to Brazil as to Iran and make clear the consequences if Brazil turns down that offer."<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, Brazil's Foreign Minister Celso Amorim and counterparts from six other countries—Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden—published a

complaint about unequal treatment under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in the *International Herald Tribune*.<sup>7</sup> And Reuters reports that Brazil may propose its own candidate to challenge Mohamed ElBaradei as head of the IAEA next year.<sup>8</sup>

Since taking office in 2003, President Lula da Silva has stepped up Brazil's efforts to emerge as a global leader of developing countries. Brazil has been pressing for a seat on the United Nations Security Council and has scored victories against the US and the European Community at the World Trade Organization. Closer to home, Brazil has sought to balance US hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, primarily through Mercosur, the South American common market it leads. Many Brazilian diplomats favor expansion of Mercosur over the US-driven negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Most recently, Brazil has headed a mostly South American UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, an effort that many observers see as an attempt to bolster its case for a Security Council seat.<sup>9</sup>

On October 4, US Secretary of State Colin Powell downplayed the IAEA controversy during an official visit to Brazil. Powell told reporters at a press conference that the US has "no concerns about Brazil moving in a direction of anything but peaceful nuclear power...and in creating their own fuel for their power plants. There's no proliferation concern on our part....The IAEA has worked out these kinds of differences in the past; I expect they will work it out this time with Brazil."

*By Alisa Newman, LACC staff*

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<sup>1</sup> Rohter, Larry. "Brazil Pressing for Favorable Treatment on Nuclear Fuel." *New York Times*, September 25, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> "Nota à imprensa." [http://agenciact.mct.gov.br/index.php?action=/content/view&cod\\_objeto=20752](http://agenciact.mct.gov.br/index.php?action=/content/view&cod_objeto=20752), September 24, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Statement by His Excellency Ambassador Roberto Abenur, Head of the Brazilian Delegation to the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the IAEA General Conference, September 2003. <http://www.iaea.or.at/>

<sup>4</sup> "Técnicos estrangeiros vão visitar usina de enriquecimento de urânio." *O Globo*, September 23, 2004, page 14.

<sup>5</sup> "Governo deve concluir a polêmica Angra 3." *O Globo*, September 26, 2004, page 38.

<sup>6</sup> Scowcroft, Brent. "A Critical Nuclear Moment." *Washington Post*, June 24, 2004, page A25.

<sup>7</sup> "Nonproliferation and Disarmament Go Hand in Hand." *International Herald Tribune*, September 22, 2004.

<sup>8</sup> "ElBaradei Confirmed Seeking Third Term at IAEA." *New York Times*, September 27, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Rohter, Larry. "Brazil Is Leading a Largely South American Mission to Haiti." *New York Times*, August 1, 2004.