

Mohammad Eslami: Atomic Energy Organization of Iran Director

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In August 2021, [President Ebrahim Raisi](#) appointed Mohammad Eslami to serve as Director of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI). Eslami has held leadership positions in military and defense, aviation and engineering, but lacks direct experience in the nuclear energy field. In 2008, the United Nations [designated](#) Eslami while he served as director of the Defense Industries Training and Research Institute as “a person linked to Iran’s proliferation sensitive nuclear activities or development of nuclear weapons delivery.

Career in Military and Aviation

Born in 1956 in Esfahan, Eslami [acquired](#) a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from the Detroit University of Michigan in 1979, according to his biography in Iranian media. That may be a mistaken reference to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. He subsequently earned a master’s degree from Ohio University in 1981. Little else is known about his time in the United States, which coincided with the Iranian revolution and resulting hostage crisis.

Although nothing was apparently reported in state media concerning Eslami in the early to late 1980s, he emerged as acting deputy for the Defense Industries Organization's engineering and development projects, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics (MODAFL), from 1987 to 1995e, and undertook the development and production of military equipment. From 1995 to 2003, he served as the managing director of the Iran Aviation Manufacturing Company, and then from 2003 to 2004, as deputy of the Aerospace Industries Organization. Eslami was awarded an MBA in aviation management from Canada’s Royal Rhoades University in 2004 and held the position of director of the Defense Industries Training and Research Institute from 2004-2008. It was in that position that he was sanctioned by the UN.

In 2008 Eslami was appointed governor of the northern Mazandaran Province by the Rouhani administration, which he held until 2017. He was then nominated and ratified to serve as Road and Urban Development Minister, following the resignation of Abbas Akhoundi in 2018

Eslami’s has held other [prominent](#) positions, including chairman of the board of directors of the National Construction Company and Iran Housing and Civil Company, which are affiliated with the Mostazafan Foundation, a conglomerate that answers to the Supreme Leader.

What we can expect from Eslami

Eslami faces a steep learning curve in the nuclear agency, [considering](#) his apparent lack of deep experience in the field. Fereydoon Abbasi, former AEOI director, and current Parliament member, [praised](#) Eslami as a figure who has had “a very positive experience in training, research leading to products, and executive management at the national level, which signal

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correct implementations of the system's nuclear strategies." Regarding nuclear talks surrounding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), it remains unclear whether he would play a prominent role to the extent to which his predecessor and trained nuclear physicist Ali Akbar Salehi did.

The Islamic Republic has been clear about its plans to expand its nuclear infrastructure, including when major provisions of the JCPOA expire. Tehran, [meanwhile](#), [continues](#) to not fully answer the International Atomic Energy Agency's outstanding questions on undeclared nuclear activities.