

MEMMO

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Tougher Sanctions Needed to Pressure Iran

Iran continues to defy the international community by pressing ahead with its enrichment of uranium. Although Tehran's claim that it can now produce nuclear fuel on an industrial scale may be mere posturing, the United States and other nations must exert maximal economic and diplomatic pressure to ensure Iran does not acquire such a capability. Combining tougher U.N. Security Council penalties with comprehensive sanctions legislation now before Congress provides the best hope for persuading the regime to abandon its nuclear weapons pursuit.

Time is running out to stop the Iranian regime before it achieves full nuclear capacity.

- Calling his country's nuclear path "irreversible," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on April 9 declared that the Islamic Republic was now capable of industrial-scale uranium enrichment, a key step toward producing nuclear weapons.
- While few experts believe Ahmadinejad's claim, Iran is rapidly advancing its nuclear efforts. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said Iran's Natanz enrichment site is close to operating more than 650 centrifuges—machines that rotate at supersonic speeds to enrich the uranium needed to produce fuel for nuclear reactors or bombs.
- Some U.S. intelligence estimates, according to news reports, go even further, putting the number of centrifuges in place at Natanz at more than 1,000.
- Iran has advised the IAEA that it plans to have 3,000 centrifuges operating by May, which would potentially give the regime the capability to produce one or two nuclear weapons per year.
- The head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization declared on April 10 that Tehran plans to install 50,000 centrifuges at the Natanz facility. If Iran achieves such a capability, it would ultimately be able to produce highly enriched uranium sufficient to produce dozens of nuclear weapons per year.

The new U.N. Security Council sanctions resolution represents a more assertive and united effort to stop Iran's nuclear program.

- The unanimous passage late last month of the new Security Council resolution demonstrates the international community's united determination to employ serious diplomatic measures to halt Iran's atomic program.
- Unlike the resolution passed in December 2006, the new Security Council resolution attempts to stem not only Iran's nuclear program, but also its destabilizing policies throughout the Middle East, including its arms exports and financial support for various terrorist groups.

- The new resolution imposes a mandatory ban upon the export of Iranian weapons to other nations or terrorist groups as well as a nonbinding call on arms-producing states “to exercise vigilance and restraint” regarding the sale of war-related technologies to Tehran.
- Resolution 1747 imposes a mandatory freeze on the assets of 15 individuals and 13 organizations associated with Iran’s nuclear program or with Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps—including Iran’s state-owned Bank Sepah, which constituted a central target of prior U.S. sanctions.
- The new resolution requires the IAEA to issue a report regarding Iranian compliance within 60 days of the resolution’s passage, thereby ensuring the U.N.’s ongoing commitment to monitoring the issue.

Comprehensive legislation now before Congress will increase economic and political pressure on Tehran.

- The Iran Counter-Proliferation Act, introduced in both chambers of Congress, seeks to close loopholes in existing sanctions law, strengthen U.S. tools to cut off funds to Iran’s nuclear program and prohibit U.S. nuclear cooperation with those aiding Iran’s atomic efforts.
- To change Iran’s course, the United States and the international community must exhaust every economic, diplomatic and political tool to further isolate the regime and increase the economic pressure to persuade the government to end its nuclear program.
- Passage of this legislation will make a definitive statement about the American people’s desire to ensure that our country is doing everything possible—through non-military means—to end activities by those countries and entities that are enabling Iran to pursue nuclear weapons.

Basic Facts Summary

- Time is running out to stop the Iranian regime before it achieves full nuclear capacity.
- The new U.N. sanctions resolution represents a more assertive and united effort to stop Iran’s nuclear program.
- Comprehensive legislation now before Congress is an important tool in increasing economic and political pressure on Tehran.