

MEMMO

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Different Voices, Common Conclusion: Iran Is a Threat

Top foreign leaders, Democratic and Republican national security experts, and leading editorialists have responded to the recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran with the conclusion that Iran remains a threat that must be thwarted. As Iran continues to advance its uranium enrichment capabilities in defiance of the U.N. Security Council resolutions, it is clear that sanctions must be stepped up to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran.

FOREIGN LEADERS and DIPLOMATS

French President Nicolas Sarkozy

"The threat exists... Notwithstanding the latest elements, everyone is fully conscious of the fact that there is a will among the Iranian leaders to obtain nuclear weapons... I don't see why we should renounce sanctions... What made Iran budge so far has been sanctions and firmness." (*The New York Times*, Dec. 7, 2007)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel

"I think that we are in a process, and that Iran continues to pose a danger." (*The New York Times*, Dec. 7, 2007)



Foreign leaders and U.S. experts from across the political spectrum believe Iran remains a threat and that continued sanctions are needed.

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband

"There are three key elements to a nuclear weapon — the fissile material, the missile itself and the process of weaponising the fissile material for the missile. The US National Intelligence Estimate on Iran's nuclear programme published this week suggests that Iran has put work on the last of these elements on hold. If so, good. But Iran is still pursuing the other two elements, in particular an enrichment programme that has no apparent civilian application, but which could produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon, despite demands to stop from the United Nations Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency." (*The Financial Times*, Dec. 6, 2007)

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier

"[The NIE report confirmed] the double approach chosen by the international community of incentives and measures from the United Nations Security Council was right." (*Deutsche Welle* [Germany], Dec. 4, 2007)

French Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Pascale Andreani

"It appears that Iran is not respecting its international obligations. ... We must keep up the pressure on Iran... We will continue to work on the introduction of restrictive measures in the framework of the United Nations." (Reuters, Dec. 4, 2007)

Spokesperson for British Prime Minister Gordon Brown

"It confirms we were right to be worried about Iran seeking to develop nuclear weapons [and] shows that the sanctions program and international pressure were having an effect in that they seem to have abandoned the weaponisation element." (Reuters, Dec. 4, 2007)

IRAN and NON-PROLIFERATION EXPERTS

Gary Milhollin

Director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control

Valerie Lincy

Editor of Iranwatch.org

"For years these expensive projects have been viewed as evidence of Iran's commitment to nuclear weapons. Why aren't they still? The answer is that the new report defines 'nuclear weapons program' in a ludicrously narrow way: it confines it to enriching uranium at secret sites or working on a nuclear weapon design. But the halting of its secret enrichment and weapon design efforts in 2003 proves only that Iran made a tactical move. It suspended work that, if discovered, would unambiguously reveal intent to build a weapon. It has continued other work, crucial to the ability to make a bomb, that it can pass off as having civilian applications." (*The New York Times*, Dec. 6, 2007)

Anthony Lake

Former National Security Adviser and current Distinguished Professor in the Practice of Diplomacy in the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

"While we've got more time, we've got to use the time, because the enrichment activities are continuing." (Interview, *The Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 7, 2007)

Leonard Specter

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Arms Control and Nonproliferation and Current Deputy Director, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute for International Studies

"The danger of a nuclear armed Iran thus remains very real indeed. The United States, its partners on the UN Security Council, and others, such as Germany and the EU, who have played leading roles in the attempt to constrain Iran's nuclear capabilities have every reason to sustain their efforts and must do so, in particular, by taking the next step in the process: imposing a third round of sanctions on Iran, while holding out the possibility of negotiations to ease the current impasse. ... The international community needs to maintain pressure on Iran to change course and must not be deflected by taking greater comfort from the NIE than it actually provides. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 6, 2007)

Jon Wolfsthal

Senior Fellow, International Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Jon B. Alterman

Director and Senior Fellow, CSIS Middle East Program

"Iran's uranium and plutonium programs are still a concern for U.S. security and are still operating in violation of binding UN Security Council resolutions. ... That being said, the fact that Iran appears to have voluntarily ended its nuclear weapons program in response to international pressure shows that outside influence can change Iran's behavior." (CSIS Paper, Dec. 4, 2007)

Gary Samore

Former Senior Director for Nonproliferation and Export Controls at the National Security Council and Current Director of Studies, Council on Foreign Relations

"The halting of the weaponization program in 2003 is less important from a proliferation standpoint than resumption of the enrichment program in 2006." (*The Los Angeles Times*, Dec 7, 2007)

John R. Bolton

Former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and Current Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute

"In fact, there is little substantive difference between the conclusions of the 2005 NIE on Iran's nuclear capabilities and the 2007 NIE. Moreover, the distinction between 'military' and 'civilian' programs is highly artificial, since the enrichment of uranium, which all agree Iran is continuing, is critical to civilian and military uses. Indeed, it has always been Iran's 'civilian' program that posed the main risk of a nuclear 'breakout.'" (*The Washington Post*, Dec. 6, 2007)

George Perkovich

Director of the Nonproliferation Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

"Iranian leaders appear to have recognized that by staying within the rules they can acquire capabilities sufficient to impress their own people and intimidate their neighbors, without inviting tough international sanctions or military attack." (*The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec. 7, 2007)

Peter Brookes

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and Current, Senior Fellow, Heritage Foundation

"There is still plenty of reason to worry about the current and future state of Iran's atomic ambitions... So the question remains whether the Iranian work stoppage is a short-term, tactical decision or a long-term strategic one. While the NIE provides the basis for some (extremely) cautious optimism, it simultaneously reinforces the need for deep concern and continued vigilance." (*The Boston Herald*, Dec. 5, 2007)

Robert D. Blackwill

Former Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Planning and Former U.S. Ambassador to India

"This latest NIE gives us a few more years to use diplomatic efforts than we previously thought... Iranian possession of nuclear weapons would have devastating strategic consequences for the West. Should Iran go nuclear, how many Sunni Arab regimes would follow suit? And, should that happen, who believes that in a Middle East with multiple nuclear weapons states, we would not eventually have

a nuclear catastrophe in the region, or even a nuclear attack on an American city?" (*The Wall Street Journal*, Dec. 6, 2007)

Anthony H. Cordesman

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy, Center for Strategic and International Studies

"On the one hand, it indicates that Iran suspended a nuclear weapons effort in 2003, and is susceptible to international pressure and negotiation... It does not in any way indicate that the UN effort to prevent further Iranian weapons development is unnecessary or that further sanctions are not needed to limit or halt Iran's efforts..." (CSIS Paper, Dec. 4, 2007)

Patrick Clawson

Deputy Director for Research, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

"The reality is that the estimate says little about whether Iran still aims to produce nuclear weapons or when it might do so. The NIE's information supports the theory that Iran has simply changed the sequencing of its nuclear weapons effort -- not necessarily the theory that Iran is no longer pursuing nuclear weapons." (Washington Institute Policy Watch, Dec. 4 2007)

NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS

The New York Times

"The new report is not an argument for anyone to let down their guard when it comes to Iran's nuclear ambitions. What it does say is that some combination of intensified pressures and opportunities might — 'if perceived by Iran's leaders as credible' — prompt Tehran to 'extend the current halt to its nuclear weapons program.'" (Dec. 5, 2007)

The Wall Street Journal

"In any case, the real issue is not Iran's nuclear weapons program, but its nuclear program, period. As the NIE acknowledges, Iran continues to enrich uranium on an industrial scale — that is, build the capability to make the fuel for a potential bomb. And it is doing so in open defiance of binding U.N. resolutions. No less a source than the IAEA recently confirmed that Iran already has blueprints to cast uranium in the shape of an atomic bomb core. ... Even assuming that Iran is not seeking a bomb right now, it is hardly reassuring that they are developing technologies that could bring them within a screw's twist of one." (Dec. 5, 2007)

The Washington Post

"While U.S. intelligence agencies have 'high confidence' that covert work on a bomb was suspended 'for at least several years' after 2003, there is only 'moderate confidence' that Tehran has not restarted the military program. Iran's massive overt investment in uranium enrichment meanwhile proceeds in defiance of binding U.N. resolutions, even though Tehran has no legitimate use for enriched uranium. The U.S. estimate of when Iran might produce enough enriched uranium for a bomb — sometime between late 2009 and the middle of the next decade — hasn't changed." (Dec. 5, 2007)