

MEMMO

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Iran Forges Ahead With Nuclear Weapons Pursuit

Iran is maintaining a rapid pace in its progress toward a nuclear weapons capability. Iran may have already enriched a sufficient quantity of uranium to produce a nuclear weapon if it further enriched that material to weapons-grade level. Such activities and defiant statements openly flout U.N. Security Council resolutions. The United States should undergird a diplomatic approach to Iran with more robust economic, diplomatic and political sanctions to persuade Iran to turn away from its dangerous course.

Iran continues its progress toward attaining a nuclear weapons capability.

- The United States and the international community need to refocus efforts on preventing Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- Aliakbar Javanfekr, a top adviser to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, told Reuters Jan. 28 that Iran had no intention of stopping its nuclear activities and rejected U.N. Security Council resolutions requiring Tehran to end its enrichment of uranium, saying, “We have passed that stage. We have rejected resolutions.”
- The Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control’s *Iran Watch* estimates that as of January 2009, Iran had 344 pounds of low-enriched uranium (LEU) in its stockpile—enough for one first-generation implosion bomb. Iran continues to amass more low-enriched uranium each month.
- At this rate, barring technological improvements, Iran could have enough LEU for a second bomb by June 2009 and enough for a third bomb by November 2009. *Iran Watch* estimates that Iran would require only two or three months to raise the level of LEU in its stockpile to weapons-grade.
- Of course, as Iran installs more centrifuges, its capability will only grow. Estimates suggest that Iran is currently operating nearly 6,000 centrifuges and is testing more efficient and advanced centrifuge models. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reported that Iran plans to begin installing additional centrifuges early this year.
- Iran’s additional nuclear activities are progressing as well. Construction of Iran’s heavy water reactor at Arak is ongoing, and the regime continues to block IAEA inspections. Experts say that Arak could produce enough plutonium to build two nuclear weapons each year.



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad says Tehran will continue its nuclear program.

Iran has failed to address concerns about the military nature of its nuclear program.

- Outgoing CIA Chief Michael Hayden recently expressed concern about Iran’s nuclear program, noting its decision to endure continuing economic pain caused by penalties for refusing to

cooperate with the international community. “I’m amazed Iran is willing to run the costs they are running if they are not trying to keep the option open for a nuclear weapon,” Hayden said.

- Iran continues to develop its ballistic missile stockpile and has worked hard to circumvent international measures aimed at keeping it from importing high-quality industrial components. In January 2009, the U.S. detected Iranian efforts to acquire large supplies of Chinese metals that could be used in nuclear-capable missiles.
- Iran continues to stonewall ongoing IAEA efforts to resolve outstanding questions about possible military nuclear efforts and has essentially cut off communications with the IAEA.
- Iran has failed to cooperate with repeated IAEA requests for design information or access to additional locations related to the manufacturing of centrifuges, research and development on uranium enrichment, uranium mining and milling.

Enhanced diplomatic efforts should not be open-ended and should be backed with tougher sanctions.

- As the United States looks to engage with Iran and given the rapid pace of advancements in Iranian capabilities, it is crucial this process not be open-ended.
- For too long, Iran has been allowed to use negotiations as a way to delay sanctions while continuing to advance its nuclear program. Negotiations should have clear benchmarks in order to judge the true intentions of Iranian negotiators.
- Former lead Iranian negotiator Hassan Rowhani proudly claimed in a March 2006 speech that while “negotiating with the Europeans in Tehran, we were installing equipment at the Isfahan [nuclear] site.”
- It is critical that Tehran not misconstrue U.S. engagement as a reward for its continuing intransigence. Engagement should be combined with tougher sanctions in order to demonstrate the ramifications for Iran if it abuses America’s genuine desire for better relations.
- The United States could sanction Iran’s central bank, an insurance company providing backing for Iran’s refined petroleum imports, or a company doing business with the Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a means of enhancing pressure on Iran’s regime.
- The United States should implement current law and sanction foreign energy companies investing more than \$20 million in Iran’s energy sector. President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton both voted to enact this legislation as senators.

The international community should toughen sanctions further if Iran continues its defiance.

- The United States and its allies should work ardently today on delineating and spelling out additional tough sanctions that will be imposed on Iran if negotiations are not successful.
- While sanctions already imposed by the United States have had a real effect on Iran’s economy—and have begun to cause some Iranians to openly question the value of their nuclear program—there is considerably more that can be done to impact Iran’s decision-making process.
- For example, the United States could lead an international diplomatic effort to prohibit the export to Iran of refined petroleum products, a move Obama backed during the campaign. With Iran forced to import 40 percent of its gasoline, limiting the country’s access to such products would have a dramatic economic effect.