

MEMMO

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Congress Takes Steps to Provide Strong Backing for U.S. Diplomacy Amid Iran's Stalling

Iran's latest efforts to stall negotiations by refusing to agree to the international offer to process its low-enriched uranium (LEU) add to already serious doubts about Iran's intentions. Given Iran's refusal to accept this offer or to meet its legal obligations to suspend uranium enrichment, the world needs to step up pressure on Tehran. Congress this week began advancing legislation to authorize crippling sanctions on Iran if diplomacy alone cannot change Iran's behavior.

Iran's haggling over the international offer to provide enriched uranium for medical purposes raises serious questions about its intentions.

- Iran's failure to meet an Oct. 23 deadline to accept an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) proposal, backed by the United States, France and Russia, to process a portion of Iran's LEU outside the country is part of a long pattern of Iranian delaying tactics.
- As with past talks, Iran did not reject the agreement, but offered its own proposal in an effort to stretch out the negotiations. Iran is now offering to send only a small portion of its LEU out of the country, thus maintaining the possibility that Iran can use its existing stockpile to produce a nuclear bomb.
- Iran is now using the negotiations over this lesser matter as a way to once again distract from the main requirement of the international community—the long-overdue suspension of its enrichment of uranium, which is mandated by five U.N. Security Council resolutions.
- President Obama said the United States will not continue talking with Tehran if it follows its long history of deception and stalling, saying, "If Iran does not take steps in the near future to live up to its obligations, then the United States will not continue to negotiate indefinitely, and we are prepared to move towards increased pressure."



Iran is dragging out nuclear talks as it continues its illicit enrichment of uranium.

Iran continues to advance its nuclear weapons program as it seeks to draw out negotiations.

- With attention focused on the more narrow issue of the transfer of Iran's LEU to Russia and France, Iran has continued to advance its nuclear program as it has repeatedly done during past talks with the international community.
- Iranian centrifuges continue to operate at the Natanz enrichment facility and construction of the Arak heavy water reactor is ongoing. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said while Iran might agree to the LEU proposal, it will continue to enrich its own uranium.

- If Iran is allowed to continue enriching uranium domestically it could replace its current stockpile of LEU in under 10 months using its declared enrichment facility in Natanz. If Iran has undisclosed nuclear facilities, beyond the recently revealed secret site at a military base near Qom, this timeline could be significantly shortened.
- According to a confidential IAEA analysis reported by the *New York Times*, the agency believes that Iran’s nuclear program, run by Iran’s Ministry of Defense, has sought to develop a “nuclear payload to be delivered using the Shahab-3 missile system,” Iran’s medium-range missile, which can strike the Middle East and parts of Europe.
- The report also indicates that Iran has worked to adapt the Shahab-3 warhead to fit the core of a nuclear bomb and has worked on triggering mechanisms to detonate the bomb.
- In addition to its nuclear work, Tehran has made major advances in its medium-range ballistic missile technology. In the days leading up to the Oct. 1 meeting with the P5+1, Iran test-fired a series of missiles, the most advanced of which represents a technological leap in Iran’s ability to target U.S. military bases in the region, European allies and Israel.

With Iran stalling, Congress is moving forward with tough, bipartisan sanctions legislation to pressure Tehran to end its illicit behavior.

- The House Foreign Affairs Committee passed the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act (IRPSA)—cosponsored by more than 75 percent of both houses of Congress—on Oct. 28, while the Senate Banking Committee passed the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability and Divestment Act on Oct. 29 by a vote of 23 to 0.
- Both bills authorize severe sanctions against companies providing refined petroleum to Iran, facilitating its delivery or helping Iran to develop its own domestic refining capacity.
- The legislation passed by the Banking Committee, introduced by Committee Chairman Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Ranking Member Richard Shelby (R-AL), includes key elements of IRPSA and of the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act (ISEA), which authorizes state divestment efforts and provides a safe harbor for asset managers. The House of Representatives earlier in October overwhelmingly passed ISEA by a vote of 414 to 6.
- Chairman Howard Berman (D-CA) of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who introduced IRPSA with Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), said during the markup of the bill that the “Iranian government should know that the U.S. Congress remains intently focused on this issue, and that there will be severe consequences down the road should it refuse to suspend its nuclear program.”
- Ros-Lehtinen said during the markup that the bill is an important way to pressure Iran by “targeting a new vulnerability—namely, Iran’s inability to produce sufficient gasoline and other refined petroleum products.”
- Dodd, during his committee’s markup, said that the legislation sends “a clear signal to Iran’s leaders that, if they continue to defy the will of the international community, our nation is prepared to confront them.”
- Shelby said the legislation represents “far-reaching, but responsible steps to enhance the Iran sanctions regime” and “makes a clear statement that it is no longer acceptable for Iran to draw the United States and its allies into unending negotiations while continuing illicit uranium enrichment activities.”