

MEMMO

Feb. 23, 2010

Sanctions Needed Now to Prevent Nuclear Iran

Iran's quest for a nuclear weapons capability is becoming clearer every day. Tehran is now producing higher enriched uranium that brings it much closer to possessing weapons-grade uranium needed for a nuclear bomb. At the same time, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has rung the alarm on military dimensions of the Iranian program. A comprehensive and rapid campaign of sanctions, led by the United States, holds the best prospect of persuading Iran's leadership to abandon its nuclear weapons quest and its oppression of the Iranian people.

Iran has spurned international demands to suspend its nuclear program and is expanding its nuclear capabilities.

- Rather than suspend its enrichment of uranium as required by multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, Iran this month began converting its stockpile of low enriched uranium (uranium gas enriched to 3.5 percent) into a higher enriched uranium of 20 percent.
- Iran began this advanced enrichment without providing sufficient notice to inspectors in violation of an agreement with the IAEA.
- Enrichment to the 20 percent level represents 85 to 90 percent of the work needed to produce weapons-grade fuel. The final steps of this enrichment process could be accomplished in a matter of months.
- While Iran says this enrichment is for medical purposes, Iran does not have the technical capabilities to turn the enriched uranium into the fuel rods needed to produce medical isotopes.
- Iran's rejection of the IAEA proposal to transfer its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France for processing for use in a medical reactor shows Iran's desire to continue its weaponization efforts.
- As President Obama said, this rejection shows that "despite their posturing that their nuclear power is only for civilian use, they, in fact, continue to pursue a course that would lead to weaponization, and that is not acceptable to the international community, not just to the United States."
- As of the end of January 2010, Iran had produced more than 4,500 pounds of low-enriched uranium that—if further enriched to a weapons-grade level—is enough for two nuclear weapons.



Iran is producing enriched uranium at a higher level – closer to what is needed to produce nuclear weapons.

International inspectors have raised concerns over the possible military nature of Iran's nuclear program.

- In its February report, the IAEA raised concerns that Iran continues to carry out numerous undisclosed activities related to the development of a nuclear weapon.

- The IAEA, citing “extensive” information collected from a variety of sources over time, expresses concern that Iran had worked on a nuclear payload for a missile, including missile re-entry body engineering and engineering design and computer modeling studies.
- Iran also reportedly worked on the triggering mechanisms for a nuclear weapon, including high precision detonators, a spherical implosion system, and the generation and detection of neutrons.
- Separate from the IAEA, media reports indicate Iran has conducted research and tests on a neutron initiator using uranium deuteride (UD3). The only application for UD3 is as a neutron source to trigger an atomic chain reaction in a nuclear warhead.

Targeted sanctions against Iran’s brutal regime are important, but likely insufficient given its commitment to having a nuclear weapons capability.

- American and international sanctions on Iran must be overwhelming to change the dynamic within Iran and to alter the thought process of Iranian leaders. Restricting sanctions to Iran’s leaders who have limited overseas assets to be targeted is unlikely to achieve the desired results.
- Targeted measures against the Iranian regime and its supporters have been part of U.S. sanctions on Iran for many years. The United States has long barred members of the Iranian regime from traveling to the United States (outside of official U.N. business in New York) and froze their U.S. assets.
- Despite designating Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist entity in 2007, the United States has actually failed to enforce any sanctions on the IRGC—a central element of the Iranian regime and the enforcer of much of the brutal crackdown on protestors.
- Washington should bar foreign entities that continue to do business with the IRGC from doing business in the United States.

Comprehensive, overwhelming sanctions are the best way to persuade Iran to alter its destructive policies.

- While the U.S. should remain open to diplomatic engagement with Iran—if Tehran demonstrates a commitment to serious, constructive negotiations—the regime’s behavior during the past year demands that the United States and the international community immediately impose new crippling financial, economic and diplomatic sanctions on Iran.
- Although multilateral Security Council sanctions would be the most effective in pressuring Iran, given the protracted nature of Security Council negotiations and the weakness of any sanctions likely to be passed, the United States along with like-minded nations should immediately design and implement their own comprehensive campaign of sanctions.
- Sanctions should target Iran’s finance, insurance, shipping, transportation, natural gas and manufacturing industries in addition to Tehran’s dependence on refined petroleum.
- Final passage by Congress of legislation that prohibits the sale and export to Iran of refined petroleum products and other similar legislation is critical. With Iran forced to import up to 40 percent of its gasoline and diesel, limiting the country’s access to such products would have a dramatic economic effect and could force the regime to change course.