

MEMMO

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As Iran Stockpiles Uranium, More Sanctions Needed

Despite some success in disrupting Iran's nuclear program, most experts today believe that Iran is at most only two to three years away from a nuclear weapons capability. Iran has stockpiled enough low-enriched uranium (LEU) to produce the fuel for three nuclear weapons and has rebuffed all negotiation efforts. Given Iran's intransigence, the United States will need to continue imposing tough, biting and sustained sanctions. Increased pressure offers the best prospect to persuade Tehran to halt its illicit enrichment of uranium.

Tehran continues to make advances in its nuclear program and could develop an atomic bomb as early as next year.

- Britain's Defense Secretary Liam Fox warned that the international community must plan for the scenario that Iran will develop a nuclear weapon by 2012. "We should ... be very clear that it is entirely possible that Iran may be on the 2012 end of that spectrum and act in accordance with that warning," he said.
- Iran has the technical capability to build an atomic weapon within one to two years from the moment it decides to do so, according to Israel's Military Intelligence Chief Major-General Aviv Kochavi.
- Iran continues to stockpile LEU and now has enough material—if further enriched—for three nuclear bombs.
- In addition to the stockpile of LEU, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi boasted that Iran now has nearly 90 pounds of uranium enriched to the 20 percent level. This level represents 85 percent of the work needed to produce fuel for a nuclear weapon.



Iran's chief negotiator, Saeed Jalili, has refused to hold serious talks with the United States and other world powers over Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has refused to discuss the future of its nuclear program in negotiations with the international community.

- Iran refused to discuss its nuclear program during talks in January with the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany (P5+1). Iran insisted all economic sanctions be ended and its right to a uranium enrichment program be formally recognized *prior to negotiations*.
- The United States and other world powers have insisted that Iran comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions prior to the lifting sanctions. European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton said the removal of sanctions "would accompany the reestablishment of confidence in the Iranian nuclear program rather than be a precondition for discussing it."

- In late 2009, Iran rejected the international community's offer to reprocess a portion of its low enriched uranium (LEU) outside the country for use in its Tehran Research Reactor.
- Germany, France and Britain originally began negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program in 2003. Tehran walked away from those talks and resumed its enrichment of uranium.

Sanctions are hurting Iran's economy and causing increased internal divisions among the country's political elites.

- Due to increasing economic sanctions and mismanagement, the Iranian government has initiated cuts to state subsidies on food, gas and other necessities. Gasoline prices have at least quadrupled as a result.
- Tighter banking and insurance regulations have led some buyers to cut purchases of Iranian oil, according to the International Energy Agency. In 2010, Iran was China's only major crude oil supplier to see its exports fall significantly, dropping eight percent.
- The increasing concern among the elite over the impact of sanctions is producing tensions within the clerical ranks. Former president and powerful cleric Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani urged the country's leadership to "take the sanctions seriously."
- In what the Associated Press described as the most "direct attack by the conservative-dominated parliament against Ahmadinejad's government," Iran's transportation minister, Hamid Behbahani, an ally of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, was impeached by the Majlis for failing to address the country's poor aviation and road safety records.

The United States and its allies must further press Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program and enter into serious negotiations.

- U.S. policy is designed to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability. Sanctions provide the best hope to change Iran's calculus and force a suspension of its nuclear program.
- The Obama administration must strictly enforce U.S. sanctions laws and penalize those investing in Iran's energy sector, selling Iran refined petroleum, aiding Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, or facilitating Tehran's illicit financial activities.
- Failure to enforce these sanctions will leave policymakers with a stark choice: accepting a nuclear-armed Iran or using military action to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability.
- Crippling sanctions combined with tough diplomacy provide the last best chance to prevent such a stark choice.