



## **Iran Pursues Nuclear Weapons despite Sanctions**

Iran's illegal nuclear activities—and its failure to cooperate with U.N. investigations—have been a cause of concern in the international community for a number of years. In the past few months, Iran has accelerated these activities in violation of U.N. sanctions, leading to further worldwide condemnation and additional sanctions by the U.S. government.

A report by the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog—the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)—in late May laid out the agency's concerns over Iran's development of a nuclear weapon. The report detailed seven activities that led investigators to believe the Islamic Republic is working on a nuclear weapons program. For three years, Iran has refused IAEA requests to explain any of the activities and has dismissed the information as a fabrication.

The IAEA report came on the heels of an announcement by Iran that it will shift production of uranium to an underground facility and more than triple its production capacity. That facility was exposed by the West in September 2009 as evidence that Tehran had been lying about its nuclear activities. The upgraded enrichment capability could allow Iran to quickly produce enough weapons grade uranium for a bomb within a year.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad pledged, in response to the IAEA report, that Iran will continue its enrichment activities, saying its nuclear project has “no brake and no reverse gear.”

Iran is under four sets of U.N. sanctions for failing to suspend its uranium enrichment and clarify its nuclear intentions. The U.S. government has imposed its own sanctions on Iran, and in late June announced a new round of sanctions on a major Iranian port operator and the country's national air carrier, Iran Air. These companies have been blacklisted for aiding Tehran's efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction, in cooperation with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard—the military unit that brutally put down the 2009 protests in Iran.

President Obama has made clear that if the IAEA determines that Iran is continuing to ignore its international obligations, then “we will have no choice but to consider additional steps, including potentially additional sanctions, to intensify the pressure on the Iranian regime.”

Despite international efforts to isolate Iran, Tehran continues its aggressive pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability. Accordingly, the United States should take stronger action. Existing sanctions must be fully implemented and tougher sanctions are needed in order to press the Iranian regime to cease its illicit activities.