



MEMO AIPAC

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Iran Accelerates Nuclear Weapons Program

Iran has made unexpected advancements in its nuclear activities since openly resuming uranium enrichment in February after a two-year suspension. The U.N. Security Council yesterday unanimously approved a statement calling on Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment efforts. The Security Council statement—the first time the body has officially asked Iran to account for its nuclear activities—is an important step in pressing the regime to halt its pursuit of nuclear weapons. If Tehran refuses to meet Security Council demands, the world body must be prepared to use strong economic and political sanctions as tools to dissuade Iran from developing nuclear weapons.

Iran has made unexpected advances in its uranium enrichment capabilities.

- The Iranians have made unexpectedly rapid progress since openly resuming in February certain nuclear activities that had been suspended since 2003. These developments, detailed to Western officials by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), have forced an alarming revision of previous U.S. and European estimated timelines for Iran's path to the bomb.
- Since last August, when it began refining uranium "yellowcake" ore into the gas needed to produce nuclear fuel, Iran has produced enough of this uranium "feedstock" at its conversion plant in Isfahan to potentially fabricate a dozen or more atomic weapons.
- Since breaking IAEA seals on uranium enrichment equipment at its pilot plant in Natanz in February, Iran has begun refining material that can form the core of a nuclear bomb. The Iranians have reportedly assembled a pilot "cascade" of 164 centrifuges that is used to produce the highly enriched uranium gas needed for nuclear bombs.
- Once Iran is satisfied that the pilot centrifuge cascade is fully functional and able to produce the nuclear fuel used in both reactors and bombs, Iranian officials have stated they will begin to build a full-scale 3,000 centrifuge operation. If this facility is completed and begins industrial-scale enrichment, Iran could stockpile enough highly-enriched uranium for its first bomb after a year of operation. Iran's ultimate objective is to deploy 50,000 centrifuges by the end of 2007.

The Security Council statement is an important step in pressing Iran to suspend its uranium enrichment activity.

- The U.N. Security Council's unanimous approval of a "presidential statement" demanding that Iran suspend uranium enrichment is the first time it has officially urged Tehran to prove it is not pursuing nuclear weapons.
- U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. John Bolton said the statement is a move in the right direction, describing it as "an unambiguous signal to Tehran that the Security Council of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security under the Charter, is now dealing with this issue."
- The statement calls on the IAEA to report back to the Security Council in 30 days to determine if Iran has complied with the demand to suspend its enrichment activities.

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- Due to Russian and Chinese opposition, the non-binding statement does not commit the Security Council to sanctions or military action if Iran does not suspend its enrichment activities. However, if Iran does not comply, the Security Council could pass a resolution under Chapter 7 of the U.N Charter, which would allow the Security Council to approve a wide array of actions against Iran, including sanctions and military force

The continued threat posed by Iran, the leading state sponsor of terror, only serves to underscore the importance of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told a Senate subcommittee this week that Iran is the single largest state threat to the United States and described it as the “central banker” of terrorism that supports Hizballah and Palestinian terror groups.
- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has called for Israel to be “wiped off the map” and envisioned a world without the United States, saying: “This is a possible goal and slogan.” Rice told the subcommittee that such threats only “crystallized what kind of regime Iran really is.”
- President Bush and other top administration officials have made clear the United States will not allow Iran to have a nuclear weapon. Vice President Dick Cheney recently stated that the regime will face “meaningful consequences” if it does not give up its nuclear weapons pursuit.
- In the event of continued Iranian intransigence, the Security Council could impose a range of political and economic sanctions targeting the Iranian leadership, including a ban on travel and measures against the foundations controlled by the ruling clerics that dominate large segments of the Iranian economy.

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