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[Subject Index](#)



[Home](#)

[Issues & Press](#)

[Travel & Business](#)

[Countries](#)

[Youth & Education](#)

[Careers](#)

[About State](#)



You are in: [Under Secretary for Political Affairs](#) > [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs](#) > [Releases From the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs](#) > [Remarks About Near Eastern Affairs](#) > [2006 Remarks About Near Eastern Affairs](#) > [November](#)

Iran's Nuclear Ambitions: Two Paths to the Bomb, Another Path to Peace

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The Islamic Republic of Iran is pursuing two paths to nuclear weapons -- a uranium path and a plutonium path. The rest of the world wants Iran to pursue a different path -- a path to peace, one leading to peaceful relations and peaceful benefit from nuclear power.

Today I would like to explain:

- . Why the nuclear ambitions of Iran's leadership are of concern to us all.
- . Why the time has come for the Security Council to back international diplomacy with international sanctions.

Iran's Failure to Cooperate

Next week we expect Mohammad ElBaradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to submit a new report on Iran's nuclear program. We expect the document to be brief, since there is little to report other than Iran's continued failure to cooperate with the IAEA.

Iran's diplomats like to cite the number of inspections hosted by Iran. But those statistics hide the truth. The truth is that Iran has failed to provide full transparency to the Agency and to meet the Agency's specific requests for access to information, facilities, and individuals necessary for the IAEA to do its job.

Iran has limited where inspectors can go, denied entry to senior inspectors, declined interviews with key individuals, and refused Agency requests to upgrade monitoring capabilities. By refusing full cooperation with the Agency, Iran has failed to answer key questions about its programs.

Let me give three examples:

First, Iran has failed to satisfy IAEA concerns about ties to the A.Q. Khan network. This illicit trafficking network was not a purveyor of peaceful technology. Rather it was the most sinister of black markets, selling nuclear weapons technology -- from blueprints to manufacturing equipment -- to countries like Iran, North Korea, and Libya when it was seeking nuclear weapons.

Second, Iran has failed to meet the IAEA's request to turn over a document from the A.Q. Khan network on machining uranium metal into hemispheres. The IAEA has reported that such a document is only relevant to fabricating components for nuclear weapons. Iranian authorities refused to hand over even a copy of this document. Instead, they confiscated and destroyed an IAEA inspector's notes on its contents.

Third, Iran has failed to explain apparent connections between undeclared uranium conversion activities, the testing of high explosives configured in a way used to detonate a nuclear weapon, and the design of a missile warhead. These apparent connections, together with other ties to Iran's military, suggest what the Director General has called a "military-nuclear dimension" to Iran's nuclear program.

Iran's failure to cooperate, as well as these and other unanswered questions, are reasons why, after three years of intensive investigation, the IAEA still cannot verify the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program.

Iran's Two Paths to the Bomb

Because the world lacks confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program, the UN Security Council and the IAEA Board have required Iran to suspend or reconsider two sets of dangerous activities:

- . activities related to the enrichment of uranium;
- . activities related to the production of plutonium.

These activities -- which Iran once pursued in secret and now pursues in violation of Security Council Resolution 1696 -- are not necessary for civil purposes. They are, however, the two primary paths for producing material for nuclear weapons.

At a pilot plant in Natanz, guarded by Iran's military, Iran has defiantly announced the start of operations by a second cascade of 164 centrifuges for uranium enrichment. It is also proceeding with plans to open a large-scale enrichment operation, with 3,000 centrifuges, in the big underground bunkers at Natanz.

Iran's leaders claim that they need this facility to enrich uranium for nuclear power reactors. But Iran has no nuclear power reactors.

The one light water power reactor under construction at Bushehr will receive fuel from Russia. And Iran's program for follow-on construction is unfunded fiction.

Seventeen countries with nuclear power purchase their fuel on the market instead of making the expensive and unnecessary investment in uranium enrichment. These include technologically-advanced countries like Sweden, Finland,

and South Africa.

France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have offered to back the international market with legally-binding assurances of fuel supply. But Iran's leaders have shown no interest.

Meanwhile near Arak, a city south of Tehran, Iran has inaugurated a heavy water production plant and is building a 40-megawatt heavy water reactor.

Before A.Q. Kahn opened his illicit market in technology for uranium enrichment, plutonium production with reactors moderated by graphite or heavy water was the technology of choice for countries seeking nuclear weapons. The nuclear device just tested by North Korea was probably built with plutonium produced from a 5-megawatt reactor.

Because of these concerns, country after country has turned down Iran's request for assistance in building a 40-megawatt heavy water reactor at Arak.

As an alternative, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom have offered to help Iran build a light water reactor better suited to peaceful research but without the same proliferation risk.

But Iran's leaders have shown no interest. Instead, defying international concerns, and disregarding the Security Council, Iran's leadership has forged ahead with construction of what one expert has called "an excellent plutonium bomb factory."

Experts estimate that 3,000 centrifuges at Natanz, once successfully operating, could produce enough highly-enriched uranium for one nuclear weapon in less than a year. Experts also estimate that the heavy water reactor at Arak, once completed, could produce enough plutonium for two nuclear weapons a year.

The Threat Posed by Iran's Nuclear Ambitions

Iran's nuclear activities are not consistent with a program that is peaceful, and more and more countries are convinced it is not. More and more governments have come to the same conclusion as my own:

That Iran's nuclear program -- with its history of secrecy and violations, its ties to the A.Q. Kahn network, its connections to Iran's military -- is actually a cover for developing nuclear weapons.

The pursuit of nuclear weapons by the dangerous leaders in Tehran threatens Iran's neighbors and threatens the wider world community. Iran's leaders are the world's most active sponsors of terror. Iran's leaders violently oppose Middle East peace. Iran's leaders support violence elsewhere in the region. Imagine those same leaders, dangerous and defiant, armed with nuclear weapons.

- . A nuclear-armed Iran could embolden its leaders to advance their ambitions across the Middle East, whether with the military forces they are building or the terrorists they train and equip.
- . A nuclear-armed Iran could pose an even greater threat to Middle East peace, including the very existence of one state.
- . A nuclear-armed Iran could cause neighboring countries to re-evaluate their nonproliferation commitments.

This could destroy the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a cornerstone of international peace and security. This could spark a nuclear arms race in one of the world's most volatile regions.

Iran's actions pose a threat to international peace and security. This is why the Security Council adopted Resolution 1696. And that is why the Security Council is now working on a follow-on resolution.

A Path to Peace

Our goal is to secure a diplomatic solution, one in which the leaders in Tehran give up their pursuit of nuclear weapons and fully meet their international obligations.

With that goal in mind, we have worked with Europe, Russia, China, and other like-minded countries to present Iran's leaders with a clear choice.

The negative choice is for Iran's leaders to maintain their present course, ignoring international concerns and their international obligations.

The positive choice, the constructive choice, the choice that would most benefit the Iranian people, is for Iran's leaders to cooperate with the international community and to take credible steps to assure the world that their nuclear program is solely peaceful. This must start by Iran meeting IAEA and Security Council requirements to suspend all activities related to uranium enrichment and plutonium production.

The IAEA required these suspensions as voluntary confidence-building measures. The Security Council, in Resolution 1696, has gone one step further, making the suspensions mandatory.

Iran suspending these activities would allow the Security Council to suspend further action. And Iran suspending these activities would allow negotiations to proceed on a long-term agreement.

To provide the basis for an agreement, six Foreign Ministers from Europe, Russia, China, and the United States endorsed a package of incentives on June 1. The package offers substantial economic, political, and technological opportunities for the Islamic Republic. In the nuclear field, these include:

- reaffirmation of Iran's right to nuclear energy in conformity with its NPT obligations;
- willingness by EURATOM, the European nuclear agency, to conclude a nuclear cooperation agreement with Iran;
- active support for building new light-water power reactors, using state-of-the-art technology; and
- legally-binding assurances of fuel supply for any future Iranian nuclear reactors.

The package also opens the prospect for political dialogue and economic cooperation beyond the nuclear field. This includes:

- dialogue and cooperation on regional security;
- improved access to the international economy;

- cooperation on civil aviation and telecommunications.

The six countries made clear that negotiations on this offer were predicated on Iran suspending its threatening activities. The UN Security Council endorsed the offer and made suspension, not only a prerequisite, but also an international requirement.

The failure of Iran's leaders to meet their international commitments -- as documented by the IAEA Director General and reflected in their defiant pursuit of two paths to a nuclear bomb -- means that the time has now come for international diplomacy to be backed by international sanctions.

Sanctions are not the end of diplomacy. They are an integral part of diplomacy. They will help Iran's leaders understand that international obligations are to be treated seriously -- not like the notes of IAEA inspectors that they confiscate and destroy.

Iran's leaders must understand that their choices have consequences and that their best choice remains a course of cooperation and negotiation.

The Security Council is now drafting a sanctions resolution. While the details are still being discussed, the strategic goal is agreed:

- to impede Iran's nuclear and missile efforts; and
- to reinforce the choice for Iran's leadership.

We hope that Iran's leaders will make the right choice: choosing the path to peaceful relations and peaceful benefit from nuclear technology over the two paths to a nuclear bomb.

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