



IRAN: An Emerging Threat?

Where Iran is Today:

Iran has not yet mastered the techniques of turning uranium into uranium gas, which is necessary to produce highly enriched uranium. They do not have enough centrifuges to enrich the uranium either for fuel rods or for weapons, nor have they gotten the test cascade of centrifuges that they've assembled to work properly. Finally, they have yet to develop a design for a missile warhead which could carry a nuclear payload.

Where Iran Will Be Tomorrow:

U.S. intelligence says it will be at least five to ten years before Iran can develop these technologies into a working nuclear weapon.

What Must Be Done Now:

The world cannot just sit back and wait for Iran to build nuclear weapons, neither can it expect to resolve the crisis by imposing a blanket of isolationist sanctions, or worse initiating military strikes. The IAEA referred Iran to the UN Security Council on February 4, 2006. It is imperative that the Security Council and its members proceed responsibly.

Military Strikes: The WORST Option

Military strikes may accelerate, rather than stop, a weapons program:

In 1981, Israel attacked Iraq's nuclear program with air strikes. At that point, according to accounts by several Iraqi scientists, the Iraqi nuclear program was unfocused. The Israeli strikes, rather than stopping or slowing the Iraqi weapons program, only served as a catalyst to ignite Saddam Hussein's desire for the bomb. Following the air strike, Saddam Hussein ordered a determined, clandestine effort to enrich uranium with the purpose of developing nuclear weapons capability.

Iran has dangerous responsive options: Were Iran's nuclear program to be hit with military strikes, the government of Iran has several credible military responses.

- Iran's Navy could disrupt shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.
- Iran's special forces could try to sabotage harbor facilities and oil platforms in the Persian Gulf or attack ships in port.
- Iran could step up its effort to destabilize Iraq by permitting terrorists to cross through Iran into Iraq, activate Revolutionary Guard cells to infiltrate Iraq and encourage Iraqi Shi'ites to continue the violence.
- Iran could encourage or order Hezbollah, an Iranian backed terrorist group, to target Americans throughout the world, including within the United States.
- Iran could refuse to sell oil to the West, causing oil prices to rise, at least in the short term.

"The margin of security under the current non-proliferation regime is becoming too slim for comfort."

Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency

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What You Can Do

There may never have been a more important time to speak up and demand change.

Call or write your Senators and Representative to tell them you support a diplomatic solution with Iran.

Urge them to ask the Bush administration for continued diplomacy.

Call the Congressional Switchboard at 202-224-3121. Find Members of Congress at www.Congress.org.

And visit us online at www.Peace-Action.org to sign up for our Action Alert Network and the latest e-advocacy opportunities.

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Sanctions Backfire

Sanctions usually do not influence the policy of countries they target. Instead, the economic impact is shifted from the governments to the people who live in those nations. The fear of economic effects will probably keep the members of the Security Council from approving any sanctions that have bite. However, if they do so, the economic burden will be felt by the people of Iran, not its leaders, and the sanctions will not change Iranian policy, but embolden it.

Diplomacy: The Only Option

There is only one way to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons – Diplomacy. It is essential that the members of the Security Council keep the dialogue open with Iran. Russia has recently played a leading role in negotiating with Iran. What should be of utmost importance to the United States is keeping the permanent members of the Security Council united in their active opposition to an Iranian nuclear-weapons program. It is important that the United States continue its work supporting Russia and others to build a strong coalition of nations who wish to see Iran remain nuclear weapons-free. What's more, there are several incentives that the Iranians would like from the United States, including security guarantees, more foreign investment in their infrastructure and assistance in stopping drug smuggling. It is only through this diplomacy that Iran will find reason to respond peacefully and allow IAEA inspections while putting aside its nuclear weapons ambitions.

Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone

Instead of threatening Iran with bombing, economic sanctions or worse, the United States should seize the opportunity provided by Iran's nuclear development to renew the call for a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East and take the first steps in actively promoting such a plan.

At present, South and Southwest Asia are the only regions of the global south not part of such zones. These zones have been effective in addressing and easing regional security concerns and preventing proliferation.

Surely, no region needs these benefits more than the Middle East. The Bush administration — with its grab bag of silence and acquiescence, tacit or actual support, invasion or the threat thereof, and on-again, off-again diplomacy toward Israel, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Iran and North Korea — seems a most unlikely candidate for vision and novel thinking on this issue. But given the alternatives — most of them bad and dangerous — pursuit of a Middle East nuclear weapons-free zone deserves all the diplomatic skill and leadership the administration, the international community, regional leaders and international civil society can muster.

For the full text of our statement on the Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone, go to:
<http://www.peace-action.org/home/01.24.06iranstatement.html>

“The U.S. and Iran should enter direct negotiations. It is simply absurd for the U.S. and the most important nation in the Middle East not to communicate directly. The Bush administration should not be seduced by exile groups with no support in Iran. Developing democracy is an internal affair.” Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Local Contact:

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