

# WebMemo



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## Penalize Iran for Defying the U.N. Security Council's Nuclear Deadline

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As the August 31 deadline to freeze its uranium enrichment program approaches, Iran continues to shrug off its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and thumb its nose at the U.N. Security Council. The Ahmadinejad regime apparently has calculated that the Security Council will fail to follow through on its threat under Resolution 1696 to impose sanctions if Iran merely signals a willingness to enter endless talks without shutting down its suspect activities or that Iran's friends, Russia and China, will use their veto power to water down any sanctions. Once the deadline passes, the United States should take immediate action to mobilize support for the strongest possible sanctions at the Security Council and press its allies to follow through with even stronger sanctions outside the U.N. framework, where Russia and China will not be able to protect Iran from the consequences of its nuclear defiance.

This course is likely to prove necessary. On Saturday, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ostentatiously inaugurated Iran's heavy water nuclear reactor at Arak, a provocative symbolic gesture. This reactor is capable of producing plutonium, the preferred fissile material for arming nuclear warheads for ballistic missiles, and gives Iran yet another possible route to attaining nuclear weapons.

### Continued Stalling

The EU-3's (Britain, France, and Germany) on-again off-again negotiations with Tehran from 2003 to 2005 only allowed Iran to defuse and delay international action and buy more time for its

nuclear weapons program. Tehran continues to stall. In its non-response to the U.N. Security Council's demand for a halt in uranium enrichment, Tehran included a 21-page document that sought to clarify "ambiguities" in the incentives offered by the EU-3 and the United States if it suspends its suspect activities. This is another Iranian attempt to bog down the issue in endless talks.

An international response to Tehran's stubborn refusal to abide by its treaty commitments—and not further talks about talks—is long overdue. Yet U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan is due to meet President Ahmadinejad on September 2. The Bush Administration should privately warn Annan that it will torpedo any last-ditch attempt to stave off international sanctions with another round of desultory talks. Iran has not paid any price for its failure to disclose its nuclear activities, which were discovered in 2002. It is high time that Iran be penalized for its continued refusal to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency's investigation of its clandestine nuclear program.

The United States should:

- **Press for the strongest possible sanctions at the U.N. Security Council after the August 31**

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1203.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1203.cfm)

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**deadline lapses.** Sanctions should be targeted on the regime, sparing the Iranian people as much as possible, and should include: travel bans on Iranian leaders; a ban on sales of nuclear equipment and dual-use technology that could be useful to Iran's nuclear program; a ban on extending credits or loans to Iran; and freezes on the overseas assets of Iranian officials, government agencies, and corporate entities that facilitate the importation of equipment and materials for the nuclear program.

- **Prepare for sanctions outside the U.N. framework.** Tehran is counting on Moscow and Beijing to use their veto power at the Security Council to block or water down sanctions. Both of Iran's friends have extensive economic, strategic, and military ties to Iran. Once it has extracted the strongest possible sanctions that it can get at the United Nations, Washington should press its European and Asian allies, along with other countries threatened by an Iranian nuclear weapons program, to impose the strongest possible sanctions, including a ban on transfers to Iran of arms, dual-use technology, foreign investment, and loans.
- **Renew, strengthen, and enforce existing U.S. sanctions on Iran.** The Iran Freedom and Support Act would improve the Administration's leverage with Iran. The act would strengthen and permanently reauthorize the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA), which imposes economic sanctions on companies that invest more than \$20 million per year in Iran's oil industry. ILSA is set to expire in September if not renewed. Once the act is reauthorized, the Bush Administration should use it to penalize companies that invest in Iran's oil industry and thereby help Iran to finance its nuclear activities, military buildup, and support for terrorism. The Iran Freedom and Support Act also would authorize the president to provide assistance to

Iranian opposition groups that support democracy, oppose terrorism, and advocate nuclear nonproliferation in Iran.

- **Improve intelligence on Iran's nuclear weapons program and other threats.** The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence last week released a report, *Recognizing Iran as a Strategic Threat: An Intelligence Challenge for the United States*, that called for urgent improvement of U.S. efforts to gather accurate intelligence on Iran. The report concluded, "U.S. policymakers and intelligence officials believe, without exception, that the United States must collect more and better intelligence on a wide range of Iranian issues—its political dynamics, economic health, support for terrorism, the nature of its involvement in Iraq, the status of its nuclear, biological and chemical weapons efforts, and many more topics of interest." Such improved intelligence would be especially valuable if it ultimately proves necessary to use military power as a last resort to defuse Iran's potential nuclear threat.

## Conclusion

Tehran's strategy is clear: Just as it has since 2002, it will pursue diplomatic gambits to drive a wedge into the tentative coalition of states opposing its nuclear weapons program and stall action while it builds its nuclear capabilities. So far, it has evaded any consequences for its nuclear duplicity. The United States must take the lead to raise the diplomatic, economic, political, and possible military costs to the Ahmadinejad regime of its prohibited nuclear activities.

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