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Recente ontwikkelingen

DOCUMENTEN

US State Department

State Department noon briefing

by deputy spokesman Adam Erelí – 22 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: Do you believe that the Iranians have ceased all enrichment-related activities and that they are, at least so far, keeping to their agreement with the EU-3?

MR. ERELI: We don't know, is the short answer. It is our understanding that International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors are currently in Iran trying to verify that Iran has, in fact, suspended all enrichment-related activity. We expect that these inspectors will report to the Director General; and that the Director General will report to the Board of Governors during its meeting on November 25th in Vienna.

Obviously, as we've said earlier, this is a situation we've been in before, where Iran has said they would suspend and then subsequently went on to renege on those commitments. So obviously, our interest is seeing not what they say, but what they actually do.

QUESTION: And you don't expect to get -- you know, we've got Mr. ElBaradei having told reporters in Vienna, "I think pretty much everything has come to a halt right now." That's not good enough?

MR. ERELI: There has been no report to the Board of Governors, so I'll just wait until we have the findings of the inspectors as presented formally to the Board of Governors by the Director General before pronouncing on what we believe has or hasn't been done.

QUESTION: And you don't expect that before the next Board meeting on the 25th?

MR. ERELI: Right.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. ERELI: Yes.

QUESTION: A follow-up with that.

MR. ERELI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Iranian Foreign Minister said with -- on interview with CNN few hours ago, said that they are going to evaluate our agreement with fellow European in next three months. Do you know anything about this evaluation after three months?

MR. ERELI: This was a statement by the Foreign Minister of Iran?

QUESTION: Yes.

MR. ERELI: This is an agreement between Iran and the EU-3. So it's not something that we really have a comment on other than to say it's important that Iran meet its commitments to the IAEA. So far, it has not done so. It has a bad track record. We are -- we consulted with the EU-3 on this deal, but we leave it to them and the Iranians to comment on its provisions and on next steps. Obviously, this would be an issue under discussion at the Board of Governors meeting and we'll -- you know, we'll be making our views clear. [...]

US State Department

Interview with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell

by Jonathan Karl of ABC News – 23 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: Now, the United States stands virtually alone in the world as a country that has no diplomatic ties with Iran. Is it time at some point to re-think that?

SECRETARY POWELL: In due course, but I think there is a history here, a twenty-five year history of difficult relations with Iran. I think many nations in the world recognize that Iran presents problems to the international community. Its nuclear weapons development program which we think they have working on all of these years. Their support of terrorist activity and other activities that we have found to be inconsistent with their obligations as a member of the international community. And the United States has not turned away or shied away from pointing out the problems that we have seen in Iranian behavior. I think it's appropriate for us to do so. Many nations agree with us. Many nations do not, they think we are overreacting. They thought we were overreacting during the first couple of years of this administration when we called attention to their nuclear programs. Finally, the International Atomic Energy Agency got evidence of it and dissidents started providing information that made it clear the Iranians were doing things that the world did not know about and were troubling. That is why the European Union got involved and the three foreign ministers got involved. They didn't get involved because there was nothing else to do that day. They got involved because they realized there was a problem with Iran's programs.

QUESTION: But you think, in due course, it would make sense to revisit the idea of talking directly to Iran?

SECRETARY POWELL: In due course, that might turn out to be the case. But I am not predicting anything at this point. We will have to see changes in behavior. It is not in the best interest of international relations for there to be a permanent enmity or animosity between two states. But conditions have to be present before you can simply walk away, not only the twenty-five year history, but current behavior that we believe is inconsistent with their obligation with respect to terrorism, support of organizations such as Hizbollah and their nuclear programs.

[...]

QUESTION: The United States has said that a nuclear-armed Iran is intolerable. So what's the tipping point? At what point does the U.S. need to consider military action to stop Iran from getting the bomb?

SECRETARY POWELL: Well, the United States has all of its options open. We are not considering any military action. We think that the last several years, as a result really of the United States' prodding, the United States' nagging the international community, we have put a spotlight and a heat lamp on Iran's programs. The EU-3 -- and I support what they have done- have now come forward with a new agreement from the Iranians that they will stop all of this effort. After running through a quick batch of yellowcake to produce [inaudible] in a hurry before they had to stop running the programs and that IAEA will verify that. That's good. That's a spotlight, the heat lamp that puts some restraints on what they are doing.

But they've made commitments in the past that they would suspend. Remember this is only a suspension, which means that it's at their choice as to whether they will start these enrichment and conversion activities again in the future. So I think that's a way of bringing international attention to this.

And so we're looking for a diplomatic solution, we're looking for a political solution. We hope that Iran will realize in due course that it is not in their interest to move in the direction of a nuclear weapon or a program that could lead to a weapons. I am pleased that the EU-3 is involved. I'm pleased that the IAEA is involved. I am pleased that the Russians have realized that it is best to provide fuel for the reactor at Bushehr, to make sure that all the spent fuel coming out is recovered and sent back to the Russian Federation, so it doesn't become misused, shall we say. So the international community is seized with this problem and is applying pressure on Iran. And hopefully, ultimately, Iran will discover, decide, in its own time that it is best not to move forward with this matter. [...]

US State Department

Interview with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell

by Hussein Abdel Ghani of Al Jazeera – 23 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: On Iran, you said last week, I believe, that you had seen intelligence that showed you the Iranians were, quote, "working hard to achieve a nuclear tipped missile." We asked the Iranian foreign minister last night, and he said that America needs to be very sure of what its saying in terms of its intelligence, mindful of your presentation at the Security Council on Iraq WMD, which didn't turn out to be the case. Are you any more confident about what you've just accused Iraq of than you were about what you accused- rather Iran.

SECRETARY POWELL: It's not so much about a matter of an accusation. It's a matter of fairly common knowledge that Iran has worked on long-range missiles for a long period of time. It is also a matter that I think is generally accepted that they have tried to improve the capability of their missiles to reach further and further away from Iran. Now, you don't build an expensive missile with that kind of capability just to shoot a high explosive warhead, which has limited accuracy.

And so I think that over time the kinds of missile development that Iran has been involved in and some recent information that I have seen, suggest to me that it is part of a broader program that could lead to the development of a nuclear weapon. They don't have it yet. But if, as we suspect, they have been working on nuclear weapons' development. And I mean the EU-3 is engaged with Iran because they had the same suspicion. The IAEA found out things that they didn't know about and they had the same suspicion. That's why such a spotlight is being put on Iran right now. But if it is the fact that they were working on this capability to have a warhead, then it seems to me quite logical to assume they were working on a means to deliver such a warhead. With respect to Iraq, the information that we presented with respect to missile developments, and what they were trying to do with missiles turns out have been accurate. It's the stockpile presentation that we made that turned out not to be accurate.

QUESTION: Do you think that if this uranium suspension, do you think that if it turns out to work, the Iranian commitment right now to suspend enriching uranium, will the U.S. get fully behind the European effort?

SECRETARY POWELL: We're fully behind the European effort now. I had...

QUESTION: Your spokesman said you were agnostic on it.

SECRETARY POWELL: I have been involved with it from the very beginning. I know every position they've taken. They've shared with me all of their presentations to the Iranians, and they've told me directly and my associates what they heard in return. So we followed it. But we thought it best to let the Europeans do it, and we stand back to see how the Iranians responded. I'm not sure the Iranians would have welcomed us to be a part of that anyway.

We also had to be somewhat agnostic because the Europeans got a similar deal, in the Fall of 2003, and got a suspension, only to see the Iranians back away from that when we got into 2004. So now the European Union has another arrangement with the Iranians, with tougher verification regime associated with it. The IAEA will be going in to monitor all of this. That's good. We support it. But, keep in mind it's still just- in the eyes of the Iranians- a suspension. And a suspension means that they can turn it back on. We want it to be turned off permanently. And hopefully with more time and discussion we can come to that point. [...]

US State Department

United States Remains "Agnostic" about EU-Iran Negotiations

Powell says United States is still awaiting a permanent solution

24 November 2004

The United States remains "agnostic" regarding the value of negotiations between Iran and the EU 3 -- France, Germany and the United Kingdom -- aimed at ensuring that Iran does not pursue nuclear weapons capabilities, according to Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The United States has been supportive of the Europeans' efforts, Powell said in November 23 television interviews in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where he was attending a regional conference on the situation in Iraq, but he noted that Iran's recent agreement to suspend its enrichment activities was not unlike a similar promise it made in 2003 and then withdrew in 2004.

"So now the European Union has another arrangement with the Iranians, with tougher verification regime associated with it. The IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] will be going in to monitor all of this. That's good. We support it," he said. "But, keep in mind it's still just -- in the eyes of the Iranians -- a suspension. And a suspension means that they can turn it back on. We want it to be turned off permanently."

Powell defended his previous statement that Iran seems to be developing weapons delivery systems intended for nuclear warheads. He said that the kinds of missiles that Iran has been developing and recent intelligence reports suggest to him that those missiles are part of a nuclear weapons program.

Powell said that the Bush administration has been intent on drawing international attention to Iran's nuclear ambitions, but he added that the United States is not alone in its suspicions about the Iranian program.

He said that the European foreign ministers who engaged in negotiations with Iran "didn't get involved because there was nothing else to do that day. They got involved because they realized there was a problem with Iran's programs."

Powell maintained that the United States is seeking a diplomatic, political solution to the issue and is not anxious to pursue a military solution.

"We hope that Iran will realize in due course that it is not in [its] interest to move in the direction of a nuclear weapon or a program that could lead to weapons," he said.

US State Department

State Department noon briefing

by deputy spokesman Adam Ereli – 24 November 2004

[...] QUESTION: All right. If there is no follow up on that, could you just give us some words about the -- your hopes and expectations for the IAEA meeting that will be held on Thursday in Vienna?

MR. ERELI: Our hopes and expectations -- we would hope for a full and candid discussion of the Iranian nuclear program based on the Director General's report. We will make clear our view that this program remains an issue of serious concern with a number of unanswered questions out there that need to be addressed.

Another topic of conversation will obviously be the agreement reached between Iran and the EU-3 on suspension of uranium activity. We expect that to be a subject of discussion and consensus on what action to take on the basis of that agreement. But I think, frankly, the bottom line is the Iranian activity continues to be of concern. There continue to be questions that need to be answered.

And, you know, we all continue to take a long-term view of this issue, looking, not just at the status quo but also where we want to be, and where we want to be is in a situation where nobody has any cause for doubt or question about what Iran is up to. That certainly isn't the case today, and our goal is to create an international environment where Iran's activity in the nuclear area is -- and Iran's actions are, you know, fully consistent with international obligations, fully transparent and not threatening. [...]

IAEA

IAEA Director General Press Briefing

25 November 2004

[...] Iran

On Iran I am going to report that we have completed our work with regard to the verification of the suspension with one exception, and that is the request by Iran to exempt 20 centrifuges for R&D without using nuclear materials.

This is an issue which we are still discussing with the Iranian authorities and I hope that I will be able to update the Board on this issue in the next hours or day.

We are making good progress. It was difficult at the beginning but since December of last year we have seen an appreciable improvement in co-operation, access to sites, and access to information. Therefore we are now in a position to say that declared materials in Iran have not been diverted but we still have a lot of work to do with regard to possible undeclared material or activity.

This is usually a long-term process. We would expect to take a longer time in Iran because of the undeclared nature of the programme for many years. To speed that process I look to Iran to demonstrate full transparency and full co-operation. We are on the right track but we still have a lot of work to do. We understand much better Iran's programme now, but as I have stated before, the jury is still out on our ability to provide assurance that everything has been declared to us.

We are working three fronts.

1. Verification. We are continuing to ask Iran for access to sites, both on the basis of the Additional Protocol, and on the basis of transparency, to build confidence;
2. Suspension. Again this is an important confidence building measure, and I hope that the remaining one issue on complete suspension will resolve itself in the next 24 hours or so; and
3. The third dimension is the European negotiations with Iran to look into the underlying issues of tension, sanctions and security. We are aware of what is going on between Europe and Iran because these three aspects of interaction are reinforcing each other. [...]

IAEA

Introductory Statement to the Board of Governors

by IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei

25 November 2004

[...] Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran

You have before you a comprehensive report on the Agency's efforts to date to verify the implementation of safeguards in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The report covers both Iran's compliance with its NPT safeguards obligations and its voluntary suspension of enrichment related and reprocessing activities.

As you can see from the report, the Agency has gained a broad understanding of Iran's past undeclared nuclear programme. This has not been an easy task, particularly in the initial phase, when the Agency's verification work was constrained by Iran's policy of concealment, misleading information and delays in access to nuclear material and facilities. Since December 2003, however, Iran has facilitated in a timely manner Agency access under its safeguards agreement and additional protocol to nuclear material and facilities, as well as other locations in the country, and has permitted the Agency to take environmental samples as requested.

There remain two important issues, concerning Iran's past undeclared programme, that are relevant to the Agency's ability to provide assurance that there are no undeclared enrichment activities in Iran: the origin of the low enriched and high enriched uranium particle contamination found at various locations in Iran; and the extent of Iran's efforts to import, manufacture and use centrifuges of both the P-1 and P-2 designs. We have been making progress on both issues.

With respect to the origin of the contamination, the Agency has asked to be allowed to take samples from the centrifuges and centrifuge components at relevant locations in the State from which most of the imported components originated, so that the Agency may independently analyse the samples. Such independent sampling and analysis may enable the Agency to confirm the actual source of contamination and the correctness of statements made by Iran. I should mention that we have recently reached an agreement with the country in question on the basic modalities for such sampling.

With respect to the second issue, further investigation is required of the clandestine supply network in order for the Agency to be able to corroborate the information that Iran has provided, and to conclude its assessment on the extent of Iran's centrifuge enrichment programme.

As stated in the report, while we have reached the conclusion that all declared nuclear material in Iran has been accounted for, and therefore such material is not diverted to prohibited activities, the Agency is not yet in a position to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities in Iran. The process of drawing such a conclusion, after an Additional Protocol is in force, is normally a time consuming process. However, in view of the past undeclared nature of significant aspects of Iran's nuclear programme, and its past pattern of concealment, this conclusion can be expected to take longer than in normal circumstances. A confidence deficit has been created, and confidence needs to be restored. Iran's active cooperation and full transparency is therefore indispensable.

As stated in the report, in a letter dated 14 November 2004, Iran notified the Secretariat that it had decided to continue and extend its voluntary suspension to include all enrichment related and reprocessing activities.

With the exception I will mention shortly, the Agency has been able to complete its verification of Iran's suspension of its enrichment related and reprocessing activities. This includes: the Agency's application of containment and surveillance measures to the uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) production process; our verification of the suspension of centrifuge component production at declared production locations; and our placement of associated essential equipment under Agency containment and surveillance measures.

In its 14 November letter, Iran also informed the Agency that the in-process inventory of the Uranium Conversion Facility would be brought to a safe, secure, and stable state, not beyond uranium tetrafluoride (UF₄), in coordination with the Agency. As nuclear material continues to become available from Iran's clean-out operations, it will be verified and sealed by the Agency. This process is expected to take one month and will be followed by a physical inventory verification. I should note that, from the time of the last meeting of the Board until Iran's decision to proceed with full suspension took effect, 3.5 tonnes of UF₆ have been produced and a number of new centrifuge rotors have been assembled. The UF₆ material has been placed under Agency containment and surveillance measures.

Regarding the Agency's monitoring of centrifuge components: in letters dated 21 and 24 November 2004, Iran stated that "all essential components of centrifuges as defined by the Agency will be placed under IAEA seals not later than 24 November 2004." This has been done. However, Iran stated that it "will use up to 20 sets of [centrifuge] components for R&D purposes and provide the Agency with access when requested. The Agency will be provided with ID numbers of those components." Iran also stated that "AEOI (the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran) is not intending to use nuclear materials in any of the tests associated with the said R&D." The Secretariat is still in discussion with the Iranian authorities on this request for exemption, and I will update you on any new developments.

I will continue to report to the Board, as appropriate, on both Iran's implementation of its NPT safeguards obligations and its voluntary suspension of enrichment related and reprocessing activities. [...]

Rep. Leach Says Military Action Against Iran Would Be Unwise

Says increased problems in Iraq, terrorism, global economy could ensue

26 November 2004

Republican Congressman Jim Leach of Iowa says the possible use of military force by the United States or Israel to eliminate Iran's nuclear installations would be an unwise course of action.

In a statement released November 24, "The Case for Restraint in Iran," Leach gave a number of reasons for his position.

-- It would complicate U.S. efforts to stabilize Iraq. "Any strike on Iran would be expected to immediately precipitate a violent reaction in the Shi'a part of Iraq, where the U.S. has some support today. With ease, Iranian influence on the majority Shi'a of Iraq could make our ability to constructively influence the direction of change in Iraq near hopeless," Leach said.

-- It would increase the likelihood of future terrorist operations against the United States. "If there exists today something like a one-in-three chance of another 9/11-type incident or set of incidents in the U.S. in the next few years, a preemptive strike against Iran must be assumed to increase the prospect to two-in-three," Leach said.

-- It would tempt Iran to destabilize the global economy by restricting its oil exports. "And Iran, far more than Osama bin-Laden, has within its power the ability not only to destabilize world politics, but world economies as well. Oil is, after all, the grease of economic activity, and a devastating Iranian-led cutback in supply cannot be ruled out," Leach said.

In place of military action, Leach argued that diplomatic and trade incentives should be used to encourage a dialogue with Iran.

He suggested that an attempt be made to create a nuclear-free zone in the Gulf region to ease Iranian fears "that it may be at a disadvantage in a conflict with an oil-rich neighbor."

Leach said the United States could hold out the prospect of not only a normalization of relations in trade but also of a free trade agreement and expanded cultural ties.

"Here, it should be stressed, hundreds of thousands of Iranians have been educated in the United States. The country has strong democratic proclivities. While the apparatus of democratic governance is extensive, real power is controlled by the mullahs. Nevertheless, few societies in the world have more potential to move quickly in a democratic direction than Iran," Leach said.

Leach suggested that the United States consider joining the comprehensive test ban treaty to demonstrate its commitment to multilateral restraint.

"We simply cannot expect others to restrain themselves when we refuse to put constraints on ourselves," Leach said.

Following is the text of Leach's statement:

Statement by Representative James A. Leach

The Case for Restraint in Iran

Before the House of Representatives

November 24, 2004

Mr. Speaker:

There are few areas of the world with a more troubling mix of geopolitical problems than the Middle East. The irony is that the war in Iraq which has consumed so much of our country's political and economic capital may hold less far-reaching consequences than challenges posed in neighboring Middle Eastern countries.

To the West, the Israeli-Palestinian stand-off remains the sorest point in world relations, although new opportunities for reconciliation between the two sides have presented themselves in the wake of Yasser Arafat's passing. To the East, the sobering prospect of Iran joining the nuclear club stands out.

It is this East of Baghdad trauma that I wish to address this afternoon.

In life, individuals and countries sometimes face circumstances in which all judgments and options are bad. The Iranian dilemma is a case-in-point. But it is more than just an abstract bad-option model because at issue are nuclear weapons in the hands of a mullah-controlled society which has actively aided and abetted regional terrorists for years.

In reference to recent disclosures of enhanced Iranian efforts to develop nuclear weapons as well as missile delivery systems to carry such weapons, concerned outside parties are actively reviewing options.

The Europeans have led with diplomatic entreaties; the Israelis, with requests for the provision by the U.S. of sophisticated bunker-busting bombs; American policy-makers, with open-option planning, with neo-con muscularity being the principal reported theme.

In the background are references to the 1981 preemptive strike by the Israeli Air Force against Iraq's Osirak reactor.

At issue is the question of whether preemption is justified; if so, how it should be carried out; and, if carried out, whether intervention would lead to a more conciliatory, non-nuclear Iran or whether the effects of military action would be short-term, perhaps pushing back nuclear development a year or two, but precipitating a new level of hostility against the U.S. and Israel in Iran and the rest of the Muslim world which could continue for decades, if not centuries.

Since the American hostage crisis which so bedeviled the Carter Administration in the late 1970s, we have had a policy of economic sanctions coupled with comprehensive efforts to politically isolate Iran.

Four years ago, Sen. Arlen Specter and I invited Iran's U.N. Ambassador to Capitol Hill, the first visit to Washington by a high-level Iranian representative since the hostage crisis.

On the subject of possible movement toward normalization of relations with Iran, I told the ambassador that while many would like to see a warming of relations, it would be inconceivable for the U.S. to consider normalizing our relationship so long as Iran continued its support of Hamas and Hezbollah. The ambassador forthrightly acknowledged that Iran provided help to both these terrorist organizations, but also noted, in what was the most optimistic thing he said that day, that his government was prepared to cease support to anti-Israeli terrorist groups the moment a Palestinian state was established with borders acceptable to Palestinians.

For decades in the Muslim world, debate has been on-going whether to embrace a credible two-state (Israel and Palestine) approach or advance an irrevocable push-Israel-to-the-sea agenda. The implicit Iranian position, as articulated by the ambassador, is support for a two-state approach, but if the U.S. on its own, or Israel as a perceived surrogate, were to attack Iran, the possibility that such a compromise can ever become possible deteriorates.

While angst-ridden, the Muslim world understands the rationale for our intervention in Afghanistan where the plotting for the 9/11 attack on the U.S. occurred. It has no sympathy for our engagement in Iraq, which had nothing to do with 9/11, but if these two interventions were followed by a third in Iran, the likelihood is that such would be perceived in the vocabulary of the Harvard historian, Samuel Huntington, as an all-out "clash of civilizations," pitting the Judeo-Christian against the Muslim world. In the Middle East it would be considered a war of choice precipitated by the United States. We might want it to be seen as a short-term action to halt the spread of nuclear weapons, but the Muslim world would more likely view it as a continuance of the Crusades: a religious conflict of centuries' dimensions, with a revived future.

If military action is deemed necessary, the U.S. broadly has only three tactical options: (a) full-scale invasion a la Iraq; (b) surgical strikes of Iranian nuclear and missile installations; or (c) a surrogate strike by Israel, modeled along the lines of Osirak.

The first can be described as manifestly more difficult than our engagement in Iraq, particularly a post-conflict occupation. The second presents a number of difficulties, including the comprehensiveness of such a strike and the question of whether all aspects of a program that is clandestine can be eliminated. The third makes the U.S. accountable for Israeli actions, which themselves are likely to be more physically destructive but less effective than the 1981 strike against Osirak.

In thinking through the consequences of military action, even if projected to be successfully carried out, policymakers must put themselves in the place of a potential adversary. A strike that merely buys time may also be a strike that changes the manner and rationale of Iranian support for terrorist organizations. It may also change the geo-strategic reason for a country like Iran to garner control of nuclear weapons.

It is presumed that the major reasons that Iran currently seeks nuclear weapons relates to: 1) Pride: a belief that a 5,000 year-old society has as much right to control the most modern of weapons systems as a younger civilization like America or its neighbors to the west, Israel, and to the east, Pakistan; 2) Power: the implications of control of nuclear weapons with regard to its perceived hegemony as the largest and most powerful country in the Persian Gulf, particularly with regard to its nemesis, Iraq, which not only once attacked Kuwait, but Iran itself using chemical weapons; 3) Politics: the concern that Israeli military dominance is based in part on the control of weapons that cannot be balanced in the Muslim world, except by a very distant Pakistan.

The issue of the day from an American perspective is weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their development and potential proliferation to nation-states and non-national terrorist groups. The question that cannot be ducked is whether military action against Iran might add to the list of reasons Iran may wish to control such weapons: their potential use against the United States. Perhaps as significantly, American

policymakers must think through the new world of terrorism and what might be described as lesser weapons of mass destruction, which might be dubbed, "LWMD."

Any strike on Iran would be expected to immediately precipitate a violent reaction in the Shi'a part of Iraq, where the U.S. has some support today. With ease, Iranian influence on the majority Shi'a of Iraq could make our ability to constructively influence the direction of change in Iraq near hopeless.

And there should be little doubt that in a world in which "tit for tat" is the norm, a strike on Iran would increase the prospect of counter-strikes on American assets around the world and American territory itself. The asymmetrical nature of modern warfare is such that traditional armies will not be challenged in traditional ways. Nation-states which are attacked may feel they have little option except to ally themselves with terrorist groups to advance national interests.

We view terrorism as an illegitimate tool of uncivilized agents of change. In other parts of the world, increasing numbers of people view terrorist acts as legitimate responses of societies and, in some cases, groups within societies who are oppressed, against those who have stronger military forces.

If Afghanistan, an impoverished country as distant from our shores as any in the world, could become a plotting place for international terrorism, such danger would increase manifoldly with an increase in Iranian hostility, especially if based on an American attack.

If there exists today something like a one-in-three chance of another 9/11-type incident or set of incidents in the U.S. in the next few years, a preemptive strike against Iran must be assumed to increase the prospect to two-in-three.

And Iran, far more than Osama bin-Laden, has within its power the ability not only to destabilize world politics, but world economies as well. Oil is, after all, the grease of economic activity, and a devastating Iranian-led cutback in supply cannot be ruled out.

Given the risk, if not the untenability, of military action, policymakers are obligated to review other than military options. One, which has characterized our post-hostage taking Iranian policy for a full generation, is isolation of Iran. This policy can be continued, but as tempting as it is, there is little prospect of ratcheting it up much more, except in ways, such as a naval embargo on Iranian oil, that would be difficult to garner international support for and would, in any regard, damage us more than Iran.

The only logical alternative is to consider advancing carrots, without abandoning the possibility of future sticks, and increase our dialogue with this very difficult government.

A proposal that might be suggested is negotiation of a Persian Gulf nuclear-free zone, which would reduce, although given the high possibility of cheating, not eliminate entirely one of the reasons Iran presumably seeks nuclear weapons - fear that it may be at a disadvantage in a conflict with an oil-rich neighbor. In return, America could offer not only normalization of relations in trade but the prospect of a free trade agreement and expanded country-to-country cultural ties with Iran.

Here, it should be stressed, hundreds of thousands of Iranians have been educated in the United States. The country has strong democratic proclivities. While the apparatus of democratic governance is extensive, real power is controlled by the mullahs. Nevertheless, few societies in the world have more potential to move quickly in a democratic direction than Iran. And just as it is hard to believe that outside military intervention would lead to anything except greater ensconcement of authoritarian mullah rule, the prospect of a bettering of U.S. relations with Iran implies a greater prospect of a better Iranian society.

Finally, a note about arms control. If the U.S. wishes to lead in multilateral restraint, we might want to consider joining rather than rebuking the international community in development of a comprehensive test ban (CTB). All American administrations from Eisenhower on favored negotiation of a CTB. This one has taken the position the Senate took when it irrationally rejected such a ban five years ago. The Senate took its angst against the strategic leadership of the Clinton Administration out on the wrong issue. This partisan, ideological posturing demands reconsideration. We simply cannot expect others to restrain themselves when we refuse to put constraints on ourselves.

We are in a world where use of force can not be ruled out. But we are also in a world where alternatives are vastly preferable. They must be put forthrightly on the table.

BERICHTEN

Associated Press

Iran Seeks to Amend Nuclear Freeze Deal

by George Jahn – 24 November 2004

VIENNA, Austria - Iran sought on Wednesday to partially roll back its commitment to freeze all uranium enrichment programs, demanding the right to run some equipment that can be used to produce nuclear arms. Iran's push to operate 24 centrifuges for what it said were research purposes did not seem to represent a major move because thousands of centrifuges must operate for months to produce enough enriched uranium for a nuclear warhead.

Still, coming on the eve of a key meeting of the U.N. nuclear watchdog agency, the demand was likely to strengthen perceptions that Iran's government is not interested in easing fears it is trying to develop atomic arms in violation of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Britain, which helped negotiate the enrichment suspension on behalf of the European Union, rejected the demand. A British official, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity, said the Nov. 7 agreement would stand.

Citing the official EU stance, an EU diplomat accredited to the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said all centrifuge activity had to remain stopped under the agreement.

The deal committed the Iranian regime to full suspension of enrichment and all related activities while the two sides discuss a pact meant to provide Iran with EU technical and economic aid and other concessions.

Iran announced Monday that it had ceased enrichment, while repeating its position that the enrichment program is intended only to produce fuel for generating electricity. It denies it is working on atomic weapons.

The suspension was clearly timed to coincide with the Thursday meeting of the U.N. agency's 35-nation board and met a key demand of the last board meeting in September. It deprived the United States of arguing that Iran was defying the agency and weakened Washington's attempt to refer the matter to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions against Iran.

U.S. officials accuse Iran of secretly developing nuclear weapons.

"Many nations agree with us. Many nations do not — they think we are overreacting," Secretary of State Colin Powell said Tuesday. But he noted the European Union nations felt concerned enough to pressure Iran into stopping enrichment.

The agency's board will also discuss past secret South Korean experiments in plutonium separation and uranium enrichment. Diplomats said South Korea's government would likely be reprimanded, but any decision on referring it to the Security Council would be deferred until agency investigations were complete.

The South Korean government claims it was unaware of experiments that it says were run by renegade scientists — a contention questioned by some diplomats accredited to the agency and familiar with South Korea's file.

By seeking to exempt some centrifuges from the freeze it agreed to, Iran appeared to reinforce its stance that suspension would be only temporary. It is not prohibited by the Nonproliferation Treaty from enriching uranium.

Even before the demand, Iran had cast doubt on its interest in reducing international distrust by continuing enrichment activities until shortly before Monday's freeze deadline.

The head of the nuclear agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said he believed the Iranians processed about two tons of raw uranium into a gas used as feedstock for enrichment.

A diplomat said the centrifuges Iran wanted exempted were at the central city of Natanz — where Iran says it ultimately plans to run 50,000 centrifuges. Tehran says that facility is meant to meet the fuel requirements of a nuclear reactor for an electricity-generating plant being built with Russian help that is expected to be finished next year.

For now, Iran is far short of that goal, possessing less than 1,000 centrifuges — most bought secretly through the black market network of Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan and the rest made domestically.

But experts estimate the Iranians are not far from being able to run 1,500 centrifuges, which could process enough enriched uranium for one warhead a year.

Iran nuclear freeze 'incomplete'

25 November 2004

Iran's suspension of its uranium enrichment programme is not yet complete, the UN's chief nuclear inspector has reported.

Mohamed ElBaradei said Iran still wants to use 20 centrifuges for research. He said he hoped the dispute would be resolved within 24 hours.

Tehran agreed to halt its enrichment programme last week.

The board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is meeting in Vienna to discuss Iran's compliance.

On Wednesday, diplomats said Tehran had asked for an amendment to the terms of last week's deal to allow continued research.

China demurs

France, Germany and Britain - the three EU countries that helped bring about the suspension - reportedly refused the request.

IAEA inspectors have spent the last few days verifying whether Iran is abiding by the suspension agreement.

Before entering a meeting with the IAEA board on Thursday, Mr ElBaradei said: "I'm going to report that we have completed our work with regard to verification of the suspension with one exception, the request by Iran to exempt 20 centrifuges for research and development without using nuclear material."

Meanwhile, the EU three are expected to submit a draft IAEA resolution calling on Iran to "sustain the suspension" of uranium enrichment at nuclear facilities in the cities of Isfahan and Natanz.

The motion also proposes that Mr ElBaradei should "report immediately" to the agency's board if there is any evidence of incomplete suspension".

Diplomats who have seen the resolution say it is unlikely to satisfy the US, which is thought to prefer a tougher stance whereby any lapse would immediately trigger Iran's referral to the UN Security Council.

The US has led calls for the IAEA to refer Iran.

The move is strongly opposed by China, another permanent member of the Security Council.

'Sheer lie'

Last week, diplomats said Tehran was rushing through production of uranium hexafluoride gas - a form of uranium that is fed into centrifuges during the enrichment process - before Monday's freeze.

Tehran denounced the accusation as a "sheer lie". It has always maintained its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

Two days after the suspension came into effect, diplomats were quoted as saying that Tehran had asked that more than 24 centrifuges be exempted for "research purposes".

Centrifuges purify uranium to fuel power plants or weapons by spinning at supersonic speeds.

"The Iranians asked to be allowed to continue conducting research and development with centrifuges during the freeze, but the Europeans told them no," a Western diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

The IAEA meeting is also due to discuss South Korea, which has admitted its scientists conducted secret experiments with small quantities of uranium enrichment and plutonium separation.

The IAEA was due to consider whether to refer South Korea to the UN Security Council, though analysts said this was unlikely.

AFP

Bush wants verification of Iranian nuclear pledges

26 November 2004

CRAWFORD, United States (AFP) - US President George W. Bush called for an agreement on Iran halting its nuclear program that is "verifiable."

The "only good deal is one that is verifiable," Bush told reporters in Crawford, where he is on vacation for the long holiday weekend.

He said that if Britain, Germany and France can agree to a deal with Iran it must be able to be verified.

"First of all, I appreciate the nations of Great Britain and Germany and France who are working to try to convince Iran to honor their international treaty obligations," he said. "And I look forward to talking to the leaders of those countries, if they can get Iran to agree to a deal, to make sure that it's verifiable."

Earlier Friday, a UN atomic agency spokesman said Iran and Europe were close to agreement on a freeze on Iranian fuel cycle work that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

Iran had insisted that it was honoring a pledge to freeze uranium enrichment, but remained at odds with European countries by demanding that key equipment should be exempted from the deal.

Iran now appears to have yielded to demands from Britain, France and Germany to drop its request for 20 centrifuges to be exempted from the uranium enrichment agreement.

CNN

Iran: Nuclear resolution unacceptable

27 November 2004

TEHRAN, Iran (CNN) -- Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said the new draft resolution put forward by three European powers at a key meeting of the U.N. nuclear watchdog is still unacceptable despite recent changes, Iran's state-run news agency reported Saturday.

"There has been a good deal of changes in the draft resolution, but still, there are points that are not acceptable to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and run contrary to the Paris agreement," Kharrazi said, according to IRNA.

Kharrazi also rejected reports from Vienna that Iran agreed to give up the use of 20 centrifuges as part of a plan to freeze its nuclear program entirely.

The Iranians had initially asked the IAEA to exempt the 20 centrifuges, which can spin gas into fuel-level or weapons-grade uranium, despite an agreement reached earlier this month in Paris which obliges Iran to suspend all its uranium enrichment activities until a broader agreement is arranged with Great Britain, Germany and France.

Diplomats in Vienna, where the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency is meeting, are extremely concerned about Kharrazi's comments and told CNN's Matthew Chance it may make it difficult to put a deal back together again.

Over the weekend, representatives from Iran and Great Britain, Germany and France will hold informal talks in the Austrian capital in an effort to break the deadlock before the IAEA's board of governors reconvenes Monday at 3 p.m. (9 a.m. ET).

Diplomats familiar with the negotiations Friday said Iran struck a tentative deal with IAEA to give up the centrifuges, and had hoped -- as a result of the apparent progress -- a new IAEA resolution on Iran's nuclear program could come to a vote by Saturday.

The deal remains tentative until Iran formally submits a letter to the IAEA outlining the terms and the European countries that initiated the negotiations sign off.

Under the tentative agreement, Iran would give up its request to exempt the centrifuges when negotiators dropped two clauses from a draft IAEA resolution on Iran's nuclear program, the diplomats said.

The dropped provisions included a trigger clause that would have automatically referred Iran to the U.N. Security Council if it were found that the Iranians had reneged on their promise to stop enriching uranium.

The second clause that was dropped would have given IAEA inspectors Iraq-style access to Iran -- allowing inspectors to go anywhere at any time.

The IAEA already has extensive access arrangements, including above-normal access agreed to by the Iranians.

Finally, as part of the tentative deal, the IAEA would agree not to seal the centrifuges with steel wires but would instead monitor them with cameras.

Diplomats said the cameras render the centrifuges unusable but aren't as offensive to Iranian pride as having the centrifuges wired and sealed.

Iran has maintained throughout the negotiations that its nuclear program is intended solely for peaceful purposes.

Guardian

Tehran agrees to freeze nuclear programme

by Ian Traynor – 27 November 2004

Iran agreed to freeze all its nuclear programme last night, dropping its insistence that some uranium enrichment activities be exempted from a deal with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Under the compromise, Tehran dropped its condition that 20 centrifuges be exempted from the freeze. The centrifuges, which are crucial to the enrichment process, would be monitored by IAEA cameras instead of being sealed.

The deal is unlikely to end the controversy over Iran's nuclear programme. Although the meeting of the IAEA board had been expected to end last night, officials decided to reconvene on Monday to agree a formula on Iran.

European and Iranian officials spent hours behind closed doors yesterday, haggling over the wording of a board resolution. The initial version drafted by Britain, Germany and France was tough on Iran, following an agreement between Tehran and the EU troika three weeks ago under which Iran pledged to freeze its enrichment activities.

But a revised draft negotiated yesterday watered down the most contentious passages and was less demanding of the Iranians. This is unlikely to satisfy the US, which is confident the EU-Iran pact will collapse.

The Europeans have dropped their demand that the IAEA be given unrestricted access to all sites.

This was opposed not only by Iran but many other countries on the board because of the precedent it would have set. The Europeans also deleted a clause allowing the Americans and others to take the row to the UN security council if Tehran broke any agreement.

The US has been taking a low-key approach in Vienna this week, but is sceptical about both the Iran-EU agreement and the resolution emerging from this week's negotiations.

Yesterday President Bush said that he appreciated the European efforts but said: "The only good deal is one that's verifiable."

The diplomatic consensus in Vienna is that the Bush administration is likely to hold fire on Iran until its second term begins in January.

The next session of the IAEA board is not scheduled until March, giving the US a two-month window to come up with a coherent policy if Iran reneges on the agreement, as it did last summer.

Reuters

Iran Makes Key Nuclear Concession in EU Talks

By Louis Charbonneau – 28 November 2004

VIENNA (Reuters) - Iran formally withdrew its demand to exempt sensitive research from a freeze of key parts of its nuclear program -- a last-minute bid to remove the threat of U.N. economic sanctions, Western diplomats said Sunday.

Iran's request to be permitted to operate 20 centrifuges, which enrich uranium for use as fuel in power plants or weapons, nearly wrecked an agreement it reached with the European Union to halt all work linked to making atomic fuel.

A diplomat close to the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency told Reuters: "The IAEA received a letter from Iran regarding the 20 centrifuges. It seems to cover all the elements and appears to be acceptable (to the EU)."

Details of the letter were not immediately available, but a Western diplomat in Vienna said it appeared to be enough to save Iran from the double threat of a U.N. Security Council referral and economic sanctions.

It was unclear what France, Britain and Germany, the "Big Three" running the talks with Iran on behalf of the European Union, thought of Iran's concession. "The process is ongoing," a British Foreign Office spokeswoman said.

The United States, pressing for Iran's case to be referred to the Security Council, accuses Tehran of wanting to build a nuclear bomb. Iran, though oil-rich, says its program is aimed solely at generating electricity.

One Western diplomat on the IAEA board of governors said he wanted to know the exact contents of the letter before making a judgment on whether or not Iran had really backed down.

"The big question is whether Iran has agreed to give up testing of centrifuges completely," he said. "Until we know that, it's hard to say that Iran has satisfied the (EU) demands."

The Iranian delegation to the IAEA declined comment.

Talks continue on EU draft resolution

One Western diplomat said that while the issue of the centrifuges appeared to be resolved, talks continued on the draft resolution which the Big Three hope to submit to the IAEA board of governors Monday. This resolution will make Iran's voluntary freeze a binding commitment.

"There are still some things that need to be worked out regarding the resolution," the diplomat said.

It was unclear whether the Europeans had caved in to some Iranian demands for the addition of some new language to the EU draft in exchange for Tehran's renunciation of the centrifuges.

A European diplomat said Saturday that Iran gave up the 20 centrifuges, but demanded in return that the EU cut a section from the draft resolution calling for IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei to immediately report to the IAEA board if Tehran resumed any enrichment-related activity.

Another Western diplomat said Iran also wanted language in the text guaranteeing Iran's right to enrich uranium.

They said both demands were unacceptable.

The EU trio has softened the resolution twice to accommodate Iran's many demands and wants talks on the text to wrap up on Monday or they will let the matter move to the Security Council, European diplomats said.

A fundamental problem in the negotiations is that the EU wants the freeze, once implemented, to be transformed into a termination of Iran's enrichment program. In exchange, the EU will offer Iran a package of political and economic incentives.

But the Iranians reject a termination of the program, calling enrichment a sovereign right they will never abandon.

The EU trio first sought the enrichment freeze in October 2003 to try to allay fears that Iran was using its nuclear energy program to develop bombs. But that deal fell apart when the Iranians resumed production of centrifuge components.

New York Times

Iran Reasserts Its Right to Enrich Uranium as Standoff Persists

by Nazila Fathi – 28 November 2004

TEHRAN - Iran's foreign minister said Saturday that Iran had every right to keep, for research purposes, some centrifuges that could be used to enrich uranium, an indication that a standoff on the country's nuclear program may not be easily resolved.

"Iran's demand to keep 20 centrifuges is not against its commitments," said the minister, Kamal Kharrazi, the IRNA news agency reported.

In talks in Paris with Britain, Germany and France, Iran agreed on Nov. 15 to freeze all its nuclear activities. But this week, Iran said it wanted to retain 20 centrifuges for research purposes, stunning negotiators. The Paris accord was meant to pave the way for a resolution to be passed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear monitoring body, in Vienna, to say that Iran was in compliance.

On Friday, it appeared that negotiators in Vienna had worked out a compromise, under which Iran would turn off the 20 centrifuges but put them under camera surveillance rather than under seal by the I.A.E.A. Mr. Kharrazi's comments seemed to indicate otherwise.

"There is no ban on research activities in the agreement," IRNA quoted him as saying.

Mr. Kharrazi pointed to the resolution drafted in Vienna by the three countries and said there were positions that were "not acceptable by Iran and were contrary to the Paris agreement." He did not specify which ones.

The talks will resume on Monday.

Iran has been walking a tight line in the negotiations, under great international pressure to make concessions on its nuclear program, while hard-liners at home lash out against moves they interpret as weakness on Tehran's part.

An article in the daily Jomhuri Islami on Saturday said that the nuclear agency's opposition to allowing Iran to keep centrifuges for research was aimed at preventing Iran to master the cycle of nuclear fuel production.

"We must not trust the Europeans who have dishonored their pledges with Iran in the past and we should develop our fuel cycle with full capacity," it said.

Last week, President Mohammad Khatami called the Paris agreement a "success," and Hossein Mousavian, a member of the negotiating team, said Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, had approved the agreement.

Kaveh Afrasiabi, a political scientist and adviser to the negotiating team said that Iran considered the deal a victory, "because unlike the United States that wants to dismantle Iran's nuclear program, Europe has recognized it and even promised to help Iran become one of the 18 fuel producers."

The United States has accused Iran of trying to make a nuclear bomb and urged Europe to press the issue at the I.A.E.A. to send Iran's case to the Security Council, where it could face economic sanctions.

There have been reports that the nuclear agency was anticipating that Iran would withdraw its request on the 20 centrifuges formally, in writing. But Mr. Kharrazi rejected that idea on Saturday. "We are not talking about a written guarantee," he said, adding that none had been requested.

At least one Western diplomat suggested that Iran might agree to abandon use of the remaining centrifuges verbally but would not do so in writing.

As foreign minister, Mr. Kharrazi outranks some of the negotiators in Vienna, but some of the negotiators report to the National Security Council, which is controlled by the supreme leader.

Opponents of the deal have put pressure on the foreign ministry and the negotiating team, arguing that they have sacrificed the country's right to develop nuclear technology.

Alireza Akbari, a former deputy defense minister, said Saturday that he believed Mr. Kharrazi's comments had been aimed at satisfying opponents of the deal in the country.

"I think the Iranian team will eventually choose its wording and say that it will suspend the 20 centrifuges voluntarily but it will be for a limited time," he said.

Tehran Times

Iran, EU reach agreement after 48 hours of intense talks

29 November 2004

VIENNA (MNA) – Iran and the European Union representing Germany, France and Britain finally reached an agreement on Iran's nuclear dossier after 48 hours of intense talks in Vienna.

Iran's nuclear spokesman said on Sunday that according to an agreement between Tehran and the EU trio capitals the twenty centrifuges which Iran demanded for research and development (R & D) will not be sealed but they will remain under the surveillance of the UN atomic agency.

Hossein Musavian told the Mehr News Agency correspondent in Vienna that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been informed about Iran's views in this regard.

It is clear that the testing operations of these twenty centrifuges will be within the scope of suspension of uranium enrichment activities which Iran has voluntarily agreed in its deal with the EU.

Musavian said Iran would hold more talks with Germany, Britain and France on this issue in the next few weeks.

With the conclusion of this agreement the IAEA Board of Governors will meet on Monday to discuss Iran's nuclear program, he added.

Musavian predicted that the board would ratify the draft resolution on Iran's nuclear program through votes rather than a consensus.

Musavian earlier on Sunday had dismissed reports by certain Western media that nuclear negotiations between Tehran and the EU three capitals had reached a deadlock.

A significant number of Iran's desired modifications have been taken into account in Europe's draft resolution and the three countries have shown flexibility in this regard, Musavian told the Mehr News Agency correspondent on the sidelines of a meeting between Iran's diplomatic delegation and the European ambassadors in Vienna. -----Pretoria calls on Tehran to reach a compromise with EU on nuclear issue

South African President Thabo Mbeki has called on Tehran to reach a compromise with the negotiating sides concerning disagreements over its nuclear dossier, official sources from the UN nuclear agency said on Sunday.

In a phone talk with Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Hassan Rowhani, Mbeki expressed his support for the current nuclear negotiations between Tehran and the EU three capitals, sources from the IAEA told the MNA in Vienna.

Pretoria supports Iran's nuclear activities within the framework of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the South African president has said.

South Africa is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries as well as an active member to the agency's 35-nation Board of Governors.

The diplomats in Vienna were optimistic over South Africa's recent request from Iran.

Iran agrees to a freeze on nuke programs

by Dafna Linzer – 29 November 2004

WASHINGTON — Dropping a last-minute demand to keep using centrifuges, Iran agreed yesterday to suspend its nuclear programs and won some additional concessions from Europe for a resolution that excludes many of the Bush administration's proposals for increasing pressure on the Islamic republic.

The resolution, drafted by Britain, France and Germany, does not include the explicit threat the White House had sought: reporting Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible economic sanctions if it breaks the latest agreement.

The United States contends Iran is building a nuclear-weapons program. Iran, a nation rich in natural gas and oil, says it wants a nuclear capability to produce electricity.

The resolution, which The Washington Post obtained, calls on the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inform countries if Iran does not adhere to its pledges and makes clear the agency's verification is "essential" for knowing whether the commitment is being kept.

The resolution also includes a sentence that says Iran's suspension of its nuclear programs is a "voluntary, non-legally binding confidence-building measure," giving Iran a lot of maneuvering room should the United States try to take it to task for ending the suspension.

The Bush administration tried, unsuccessfully, to convince allies that Iran should be the target of more aggressive U.N. inspections, as Iraq had been before the U.S.-led invasion in March 2003.

Iran has been under IAEA investigation for two years, and inspectors frequently visit the country. But under international treaty laws, Iran is not obligated to provide access to military sites and has been cooperating voluntarily with the investigation.

The IAEA's board will meet to possibly adopt the resolution today in Vienna, Austria, though diplomats cautioned there could be more negotiating.

"People here are very unhappy about all this, but we have to go through the motions," one official in Washington said. "We think Iran will break this deal soon enough, anyway."

Iran's commitment to halt its nuclear programs was part of an agreement it reached with Britain, France and Germany two weeks ago. In exchange for the suspension, the European countries promised Iran they wouldn't support U.S. attempts to refer the case to the Security Council as long as the suspension holds.

Iran almost derailed the deal last week when it announced it would continue research work with 20 centrifuges. After three days of international pressure, Iran sent a letter yesterday rescinding the request but used it to win additional concessions from the Europeans, including the added mention that the suspension was voluntary.

Centrifuges are used to enrich uranium for power generation or, if the uranium is highly enriched, for nuclear weapons. And while uranium enrichment does not violate the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty that Iran has signed, for months it has been under pressure to freeze all related activities to ease fears it might want to use the technology to make weapons.

In a face-saving arrangement, the 20 centrifuges will not be under IAEA seal. Instead, diplomats said, the equipment will be monitored by agency cameras, and Iran has promised not to use the centrifuges, diplomats said.

Gary Samore, a nonproliferation expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, called Iran's maneuvering a "negotiating gambit" aimed at scoring points ahead of the crucial next round of negotiations with the Europeans, set to begin in mid-December. "The board resolution is just a holding action to establish the basis for long-term negotiations between Iran and the EU," he said.

The second phase of the agreement will begin next month, when diplomats from all four countries begin open-ended negotiations on nuclear, economic and regional security issues aimed at reaching a final accord between Iran and Europe. European officials expect the talks to end with Iran permanently giving up its nuclear ambitions.

The Europeans are aiming to make the suspension permanent with a deal that could lead to European support for Iranian membership in the World Trade Organization and access to a light-water reactor.

Iran safe for now from possible UN sanctions: diplomats

AFP – 29 November 2004

VIENNA - The UN nuclear watchdog meets on Monday in Vienna with Iran virtually safe from possible UN sanctions after agreeing to a full freeze of all nuclear enrichment activities that could make uranium for atomic weapons.

The Iranian government sent a letter Sunday to the watchdog International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) withdrawing its demand to exempt 20 centrifuges from a freeze of its uranium enrichment activities, Iranian nuclear negotiator Hossein Moussavian told AFP.

Hardliners in Iran had said the exemption should be maintained for research purposes but Moussavian said: "I confirm... that Iran will permit the IAEA to place these components, 20 centrifuges, under agency surveillance."

"Iran will not conduct any testing (of the centrifuges)," Moussavian said.

EU negotiators Britain, France and Germany had given Iran until late Sunday to agree to a full freeze, based on an enrichment suspension the four countries had agreed to in Paris on November 7 and which began November 22.

If Iran did not finally comply, the European trio were ready to propose a tough resolution at an IAEA meeting, which was supposed to end after two days on Friday but was adjourned until Monday due to the deadlock, diplomats said.

With Iran agreeing to a full suspension, the European trio submitted Sunday a relatively soft draft resolution on Iran's nuclear program, diplomats said.

The text is expected to be adopted by consensus by the IAEA on Monday.

The United States wants the IAEA to send Iran before the UN Security Council, which could impose sanctions, for what it says is a covert nuclear weapons program but this is unlikely now that Iran has agreed to a full suspension and accepts the European resolution, diplomats said.

The European trio has for over a year been working for "constructive engagement" for Iranian cooperation with the IAEA.

The trio (EU3) brokered an uranium enrichment suspension in October 2003 but this fell apart when Tehran continued making centrifuges, the machines which enrich uranium for nuclear fuel but also for what, in highly refined form, can be the explosive core of atomic bombs.

US officials said Washington was ready to back the latest European proposal as long as Iran fully suspended uranium enrichment.

Washington is biding its time as it is convinced evidence will emerge of a covert Iranian program, diplomats said.

A European diplomat said the freeze and the draft resolution were "certainly a big step forward but it's not the end of the story."

"There are still difficult questions about Iran's enrichment program," with Iran wanting the freeze to be temporary and the EU, as well as the United States, seeking for it to be permanent, the diplomat said.

It also was not clear whether Iran was simply trying to delay the IAEA.

Moussavian told AFP that Iran would "discuss further with the EU3 in December when discussions for a long-term arrangement (on the freeze) commence."

It was not clear if this meant that Iran plans to review in December, once the IAEA board meeting is over, whether centrifuges can be used for research, diplomats said.

The draft resolution is a painstaking compromise between US hardline demands and Iranian threats to stop cooperating, diplomats said.

The resolution calls for continuing investigations into sensitive aspects of Iran's program as agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei has said that while no diversion of nuclear materials for weapons purposes has been detected, he can not yet rule out that there is covert activity.

Moussavian said the last problem in the resolution had been a phrase that "underlines that the full and sustained implementation of this confidence-building measure is essential to addressing outstanding issues."

Diplomats said the word "essential" was left in while Iran won a re-working to add the phrase "not legally binding," as it claims it has the right to enrich uranium according to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), even it is for now voluntarily agreeing to a freeze.

November 29 2004 17:57

Iran's nuclear agreement with European governments was endorsed by the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency on Monday despite resistance from the US, which urged inspectors to remain vigilant.

After days of wrangling, the United Nations nuclear watchdog passed a mildly-worded resolution that avoided the case being referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions, as the US had wanted. Instead it confirmed the European approach to dealing with Iran. It underlined that Iran had started its promised suspension of uranium enrichment, as agreed mid-month with the UK, France and Germany, in return for co-operation with Europe on nuclear, economic and security issues.

The US wants stringent inspections to ensure Iran complies. The resolution noted that Iran had committed "many breaches" of its safeguard commitments up to October 2003, but had made "good progress" since. "The implementation and verification of the agreement is critical," said Scott McClellan, White House spokesman. "Iran has failed to comply with its commitments many times and for this agreement to succeed, the Europeans, the IAEA and the IAEA board of governors, as well as all members of the international community, will need to remain vigilant."

Iran denies US claims that it has a covert weapons programme, but the IAEA says it is "not yet in a position to conclude that there are no undeclared nuclear materials or activities" there.

Western diplomats in Vienna said the White House was convinced Iran would soon renege on the deal, leaving the UK, France and Germany no option but to back the tougher US approach of trying to contain and isolate Tehran. European envoys admitted keeping the agreement on track would be a struggle.

A similar accord reached last year soon ran into trouble. This month's deal threatened to unravel last week when Iran asked to continue operating 20 centrifuges, which are used to enrich uranium. European officials said Iran had backed down but statements from Iranian officials were ambiguous.

Mohamed ElBaredei, the IAEA director, said the centrifuges, monitored by IAEA cameras, were "not operating" and that "we clearly would report to the board should there be any change of status". But Hossein Mousavian, foreign policy chief of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said work on the devices, which convert gas into enriched uranium, would continue under IAEA supervision.

The resolution noted that Iran's suspension of enrichment activities was voluntary, as Iranian officials insisted, and not a legal obligation. European governments hope to persuade Iran to make the suspension permanent while offering trade incentives and help with its civil nuclear programme. "We should now concentrate on the future of co-operation with Europe after 25 years of difficult political dialogue," Mr Mousavian said.

Additional reporting by Gareth Smyth and Najmeh Bozorgmehr in Tehran