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USADI Commentary

Time Running Out to Stop Mullahs' Nuclear Terror

There were welcome reports of the United States taking a tougher line against Iran's nuclear defiance last week. President Bush, National Security advisor Dr. Condoleezza Rice and other administration officials told Tehran leaders that their continued push for a nuclear weapon capability would no longer be tolerated.

Some reports indicate that Iran's nuclear dossier would be referred to the United Nations Security Council following the September meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The New York Times wrote that there were also plans for covert actions to slow down Tehran's nuclear drive.

This is a major step forward but may not be enough. Given the speed and extent of Iran's nuclear program and the UN's lethargic bureaucracy, imposing meaningful sanctions on the Iranian regime may take a while.

Tehran rulers are betting that Iraq-fatigue and the presidential elections in the U.S. will dissuade Washington from appropriate and timely measures to halt their drive. They are also banking on the trans-Atlantic divide as to how to deal with their nuclear campaign. This was evident in the tone and substance of demands Tehran made to the Britain, Germany, and France when they met in Paris to discuss Iran's nuclear drive. Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi demanded that the EU-3 provide advanced nuclear technology, conventional weapons and a security guarantee in exchange for nothing.

A series of terror threats from Iran followed these extraordinary demands. Last Monday, the Financial Times quoted an "Iranian official" who was a "regime insider" as saying that "If there is more criticism in September, Iran will remove the [IAEA] cameras [at nuclear sites] and start injecting the gas [the final stage of uranium enrichment]."

He added that "radicals" were now thinking of "stupid things" against the US and even Europe. He recalled the days when Iran 'carried out assassinations' in Europe and recalled that bombings in Madrid this year changed the course of a general election in Europe," according to the Times. On August 1, the Los Angeles Times quoted "investigators in France, Italy, Spain and other countries" that there was an increasing belief that "suspected masterminds of this year's train bombing in Madrid" were in Iran.

Meanwhile, Defense Minister Ali Shamkhani announced Wednesday that Iran has carried out a successful field test of the latest version of its Shahab-3 medium-range ballistic missile, which according to defense experts can reach U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf and other countries in the region. The Shahab-3 can carry a nuclear warhead.

Iranian missile tests threaten the Middle East region, the U.S. government said after Iran announced its test. The Bloomberg news agency reported that "the United States has serious concerns about Iran's missile programs," and "views Iran's efforts to further develop its missile capabilities as a threat to the region and to the United States interests."

The EU-3 must take stock of these ominous developments and recognize that engaging terrorist regimes such as Iran will strategically be counterproductive despite whatever short term economic windfalls it might bring. A terrorist and nuclear-capable regime in Tehran would exert its hegemony in the region for years to come. It would also feel invigorated in its heavy-handed approach to domestic dissent.

Only after this fundamentalist regime is unseated would the world see an Iran free of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and tyranny. To this end, we must support and work with those Iranian opposition groups, which are anti-fundamentalist and seek a secular, representative government in Iran. In the meantime, practical measures, including but not limited to referring Iran's dossier to the UN Security Council, must be taken to slow down the mullahs' nuclear drive.

The US Alliance for Democratic Iran (USADI), is an independent, non-profit organization, which aims to advance a US policy on Iran that will benefit America's interests, through supporting Iranian people's aspirations for a democratic, secular, and peaceful government, free of tyranny, fundamentalism, weapons of mass destruction, and terrorism. The USADI is not affiliated with any government agencies, political groups or parties.

1201 Pennsylvania Ave, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004

Tel: 202-661-4675, Fax: 202-318-0402, E-mail: dispatch@usadIran.org

International Herald Tribune

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If Iran is not checked, nuclear terror is next

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts - The keystone of any plan to prevent nuclear terrorism would be to curb the advancing programs of states that aspire to possess nuclear weapons. As was shown by the black-market nuclear network run by Pakistan's Abdul Qadeer Khan, state programs provide a springboard for others who want to develop nuclear capabilities.

Senator John Kerry and President George W. Bush have both committed themselves to preventing nuclear terrorism, but neither has presented a useful policy plan for dealing with such states, especially when, like Iran, they maintain strong cooperation with terrorist elements... In creating a plan for preventing a nuclear Iran, the next U.S. president should bear in mind the following:

First, multilateralism is important but not sufficient. Last autumn, Washington bowed to European wishes to engage Iran through cooperative measures, hoping that it would abandon its nuclear program.

The result: Tehran's failure to declare all of its nuclear activities continued into this year, its Parliament failed to ratify the Additional Protocol, Iran is gearing up to resume uranium enrichment, and inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency faced obstructions several times. Concerned voices in Europe realize that Tehran simply gained a year to advance its program. Some key Europeans are now seeking an effective plan that would rescue their policy of engagement. The United States should lead with concrete policy options.

The next American president should also acknowledge that the United States needs accurate intelligence on the extent and location of Iran's nuclear program, including the layout of facilities... U.S. intelligence agencies must receive adequate resources if they are to determine the extent of the Iranian nuclear program and the potential opportunities for terrorists that it provides.

In addition, centralized control over fissile materials must be maintained during any potential chaos in Iran, and this issue should be addressed by a contingency plan...

The shoes of the nuclear blackmarketeer Abdul Qadeer Khan should remain empty. The United States and its allies should focus on the personal responsibility of Iranian proliferators. Individuals who are engaged in advancing the Iranian program should be personally deterred and prevented from sharing information or materials with terrorist elements...

Preventing nuclear terrorism will be the defining national security issue of the next administration, and restraining Iran is key. Whoever wins the U.S. presidential election in November must have a solid policy plan.

Excerpts from an article by Brenda Shaffer, a fellow at the International Security Program at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Dow Jones News

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Iran Warns Of Tough Response To Nuclear Sanctions

LONDON - Iran has warned it will take tough measures in response to any attempt by the U.S. to block the development of its nuclear program through the U.N. Security Council, the Financial Times reports Monday.

In interviews, Iranian officials reacted defiantly to statements by the U.S. administration it would press the International Atomic Energy Agency next month to refer the issue to the Security Council.

In Tehran, Hossein Musavian, foreign policy chairman of the Supreme National Security Council, said Iran had rejected a request from France, Germany and the U.K. at recent talks in Paris to "relinquish" control of uranium enrichment as a "confidence building measure."

The European proposal, which envisages the international supply of enriched uranium to Iran and the later removal of spent fuel, was intended to head off confrontation at the IAEA meeting in Vienna.

A second Iranian official told the Financial Times the situation "was on the verge of something drastic". He said Iranian security planners expected the IAEA would pass a critical resolution in September and that the U.S. might even attack targets in Iran.

"If there is more criticism in September, Iran will remove the (IAEA) cameras (at nuclear sites) and start injecting the gas (the final stage of uranium enrichment)," he said. "Iran notes the example of North Korea, a regime the U.S. is negotiating with."

The official, a regime insider, said "radicals" were now thinking of "stupid things against the U.S. and even Europe." He recalled the days when Iran "carried out assassinations" in Europe and recalled that bombings in Madrid this year changed the course of a general election. Europe, he said, had long been aware that Iran sought nuclear weapons and had earlier supplied dual-use technology.