

USADI Dispatch

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USADI Commentary

Of Mullahs and Nukes: What to Do?

The report this week about Iran's Parchin military complex being a possible nuclear weapons site has greatly undermined the rationale of reaching a nuclear "grand bargain" with Tehran. If anything, it should point to the futility of reaching a nuclear deal with an intrinsically terrorist regime whose foremost priority is to reach the nuclear point of no return.

This enormous complex, 20 miles southeast of Tehran, is owned by Iran's military industry and has hundreds of buildings and test sites. In a report by Institute for Science and International Security, David Albright and Corey Hinderstein wrote that based on a review of overhead imagery this site would be a logical candidate for a nuclear weapons-related site, particularly for research and development of high explosive components for an implosion-type nuclear weapon.

The revelations on the mullahs' regime nuclear weapons program by the Iran's main opposition coalition, the National Council of Resistance, and the findings of the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA, have convinced almost everyone, even Tehran's apologists in the EU capitals and Washington, that Iran is working toward the A-bomb. Short of a nuclear bomb surfacing in one of the suspect sites – a smoking gun of some sort - the evidence is overwhelming. This consensus, however, ends when the debate over what to do about this threat begins. The opinion pages and talk shows abound with often-contradictory ideas.

The Europeans have attempted to engage the regime, hoping to convince it to abandon uranium enrichment and stop lying to the IAEA. The past record and - as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Dick Lugar noted recently - the abject failure of a similar deal the EU-3 reached with Tehran last year has left this approach completely discredited. Still, supporters of engagement in foreign policy establishments such as the Council on Foreign Relations and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace continue to speak of the need to strike a bargain with Tehran.

On the opposite side, there are those who advocate a tougher line towards Tehran, ranging from working with the United Nations Security Council to diplomatic isolation to working for regime change in Iran.

Diplomatic initiatives, such as referring Iran's nuclear dossier to the UN, while a welcome departure from the spineless soft approach of the EU, would still provide Tehran valuable time and diplomatic cover to keep on its pace.

Some experts argue that the most realistic approach seems to be one of regime change. The idea of Tehran reforming itself rests more on hope than experience, they point out. A quarter century after ruling Iran with an iron fist, the fanatical clerics are not about to abandon what has kept them in power for so long, repression at home and crisis making abroad.

While regime change advocates may be correct at least in theory, what they lack is creativity and backbone to make their idea work. Regime change in Iran must rest upon bold and practical steps that are consistent with the dynamics of Iran's political landscape and the geopolitical equation between Iran and Iraq. With Iran working round-the-clock to destabilize Iraq, the likelihood of democracy flourishing in that country are quite remote so long as the big neighbor the east remains in the hands of the fundamentalists.

Similarly, the threat of a nuclear-armed, fundamentalist Iran would subside only when a democratic, secular and peaceful government is established there. The millions in Iran and anti-fundamentalist opposition groups must be encouraged in their efforts to bring about that change.

To this end, our administration must:

- 1- Abandon the notion of engagement and all of its aliases, including "grand bargain" or "direct dialogue," by embracing regime change as the official policy of the United States;
- 2- Offer recognition to, and support for, the Iranian people's two-decade long struggle against clerical regime;
- 3- End all restrictions on Iran's democratic and anti-fundamentalist opposition forces as they work to realize regime change there. We must help create a better balance of power between the regime and its opposition;
- 4- Remove Iran's main opposition group, the Iranian Mujahedeen Khalq (MEK) from the State Department's terrorist list, as suggested by many American policy experts and veteran military analysts. After a 16-month probe of the MEK and its members in Camp Ashraf, Iraq, turned up no wrongdoing on their part, there are strong moral, legal and political reasons to do so.

For a variety of historical and political reasons, the heavy burden of this regime change must fall and has fallen on the shoulders of Iranians themselves. The outside world and the United States in particular, however, can play a major role in expediting this change. America cannot afford to wait until after the presidential election in November.

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@usadيران.org

Reuters**September 14, 2004****US study says a nuclear Iran would aid more terror**

WASHINGTON - Iran could acquire a nuclear bomb in the next one to four years and would become more willing to aid terrorist groups once it has an atomic capability, according to a U.S. study released on Tuesday.

The study by the Non-proliferation Policy Education Center, which was partly funded by the Pentagon, said U.S. talks with Iran on the nuclear issue -- which the Bush administration opposes -- would be "self-defeating."

Instead it proposed steps like pressing Israel to freeze its own atomic capability, raise the cost of Iran going nuclear and dissuade other countries from following Tehran.

"Iran is now no more than 12 to 48 months from acquiring a nuclear bomb, lacks for nothing technologically or materially to produce it and seems dead set on securing the option to do so," said the think tank's study, headed by Henry Sokolski.

"As for the most popular policy options -- to bomb or bribe Iran -- only a handful of analysts and officials are willing to admit publicly how self-defeating these courses of action might be," it added.

The study addresses a thorny problem confronting the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog.

Secretary of State Colin Powell ruled out direct talks with Tehran, saying in an interview with Reuters "we just don't want to make it a U.S. and Iran issue." As for when Iran might acquire a bomb, Powell said: "I don't think they are days or months away from such a development," suggesting there is still time for diplomacy to work.

The report, based on research papers and meetings with experts on Iran, the Middle East and non-proliferation, said if Iran gets the bomb it would pose a heightened threat in three key areas.

Countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Algeria might move to develop their own nuclear options.

Oil prices would increase dramatically, forced upward by Iranian threats to freedom of the seas.

And "with a nuclear weapons option acting as a deterrent to U.S. and allied actions against it, Iran would likely lend greater support to terrorists operating against Israel, Iraq, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Europe and the U.S.," the study said.

Because eliminating Iran's nuclear option "may no longer be possible," Washington and its allies must take other steps to curb Tehran once it got the bomb, the study said.

These include persuading Israel to initiate a nuclear restraint effort that would close down its Dimona reactor and isolate Iran as a regional producer of fissile materials.

It is also recommended that the U.S. offer Russia some sort of compensation for ending its nuclear cooperation with Iran.

ABC News**September 15, 2004****Armed and Dangerous?**

The U.S. government and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have questions about a military site in Iran with suspected ties to the country's nuclear program, ABC News has learned.

Iran's Parchin complex — covering approximately 15 square miles and located about 19 miles southeast of Tehran — is known as a center for the production of conventional ammunition and explosives. A State Department official has confirmed the United States suspects nuclear activity at some of its facilities. The suspicions focus on possible testing of high explosives.

"Parchin is the center of Iran's munitions industry and home to Iran's oldest ammunition factory, founded before World War II," said John Pike, director of GlobalSecurity.org, an organization that seeks to reduce reliance on nuclear weapons.

"It would be the logical place for Iran to conduct weaponization work on an atomic bomb and the logical place for us to look for such work," he said.

Images of Parchin, obtained exclusively by ABC News, show a building within the facility's high-explosive test area that could permit the testing of especially large explosions, including those relevant to the development of a nuclear weapon.

"While the imagery is not definitive, it raises enough questions that Iran should allow IAEA inspection of the site to alleviate concerns," said Corey Hinderstein, deputy director of the Institute for Science and International Security — a nonprofit, nonpartisan institution that seeks to inform the public about science and policy issues affecting international security.

An affiliation between Parchin and Iran's nuclear program had not been previously suspected, and the site has not been inspected by IAEA experts. A recent report by the atomic agency did not mention the location, but ABC News has learned the IAEA asked Iran privately to visit the facility more than a month ago. U.S. and U.N. sources say Iran has ignored the request.