

**U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information,
and International Security**

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Iran: Tehran's Nuclear Recklessness and the U.S. Response

Testimony of

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. It is an honor to testify before you today on this important subject. I am testifying solely in my own behalf and not as a representative of any organization. By way of identification I served as Director of Central Intelligence, 1993-95, and have held Presidential appointments in two Republican and two Democratic administrations during a career that has generally been devoted to private law practice and, now, consulting.

Whatever hope there might have been after the 1997 election of President Khatami that the current government of Iran would have been willing to work with the West, turn from fanaticism, and forgo a nuclear weapons program died, in my view, about a year into Khatami's first term. It was then, in mid-1998, that the theocratic fanaticism that has been the guiding spirit of the regime since 1979 reasserted itself after a year of uncertainty, resumed the murdering of Iranian dissidents and reformers, and killed any hope of reform by the regime itself. Those who saw any opportunity for reform during the last Iranian Presidential election early this year, particularly in the candidacy of Mr. Rafsanjani, were in my judgment deluding themselves - somewhat analogously, perhaps, to those who once convinced themselves that Mr. Andropov would be a reformer in the USSR because, supposedly, he drank Scotch and liked jazz.

With the ascendancy of Mr. Ahmadinejad to the Presidency a few months ago, and with Iran's rejection last Saturday of a proposal from the EU-3 -- Britain, France, and Germany -- that Iran's nuclear fuel be enriched by Russia, one would think that even those most committed to the fiction that this Iranian government might turn from its nuclear ambitions must be coming to face the cold reality of the Iranian nuclear weapons program.

There is no reason in economics or common sense for Iran to be involved in fuel enrichment and processing unless it has a nuclear weapons program. This is admittedly a question on intent under the current, flawed, Non-

Proliferation Treaty, but the Iranian intent is crystal clear to any objective observer. Moreover, recent press reports, particularly a lengthy report in the New York Times last Sunday by William Broad and David Sanger, have disclosed Iranian warhead work on the Shahab missile that is consistent with nuclear warhead development. Iran hid its fuel enrichment work until it the IAEA was tipped off in 2003 and then discovered Iranian preparation for uranium enrichment (via the use of over 50,000 centrifuges) at Natanz and construction of a heavy water plant and reactor to produce plutonium at Arak. IAEA inspectors have further found at least seven covert Iranian nuclear sites and, at one, traces of uranium enriched to the high levels needed for a bomb rather than the much lower levels needed for a reactor generating electric power. Iran bulldozed one site, at Lavizan-Shian, before inspectors were allowed to visit it.

Iran has acknowledged acquiring obtaining nuclear materials from the notorious head of the Pakistani program, A Q Khan, but the extent of that trafficking is still being investigated. Moreover recent material obtained by US intelligence from Iran, cited in the Broad/Sanger article, indicates Iranian work on: (a) a sphere of detonated conventional explosives designed to compress the radioactive material to begin the chain reaction in a bomb; (b) positioning a heavy ball inside the warhead to ensure stability and accuracy during the terminal phase of a nuclear-armed missile's flight; and (c) detonation at the 2,000-foot altitude appropriate only for nuclear weapons.

Although one individual at a Washington-based NGO was reported in the Times article as speculating that one possible explanation for the above Iranian activities was that they might be evidence of "the uncoordinated effort of a particularly ambitious sector of the [Iranian] rocket program" the chance of such rogue activity within the nuclear weapons program of a fanatically totalitarian theocracy seems slim indeed.

How soon might Iran obtain nuclear weapons? It all hinges on how soon they can obtain adequate fissionable material. Some aspects of the capabilities of a more sophisticated plutonium weapon might be desirable to those managing the Iranian nuclear weapon and missile programs. But it should be remembered that in the case of highly enriched uranium, once the nuclear material is available a simple shotgun-design weapon, similar to that which we used on Hiroshima sixty years ago, could be quickly produced. Estimates of how far the Iranians are from having nuclear weapons thus doubtless depend heavily on assessments of the maturity of their fuel enrichment and processing capabilities. But if they were supplied with highly enriched uranium by some outside source, such as their erstwhile collaborator, North Korea, simple nuclear weapons could be available to them in very short order.

What are our alternatives in terms of policy? The theory behind giving the responsibility for negotiating with Iran to the EU-3 was that we would thereby be more likely to see their being willing to implement severe sanctions against Iran if it persisted in its nuclear weapons program. But, as Reuel Marc Gerecht has recently pointed out in *The Weekly Standard*, \$60-a-barrel oil (Iran's only substantial export) severely undercuts this possibility even to the degree it might have theoretically existed.

What then are our options? First we must be clear-eyed about the nature of the Ahmadinejad regime. There is no possibility, none, of working with it or moderating it. For example, at the recent "World Without Zionism" conference in Tehran, Ahmadinejad displayed a large hour-glass with a broken USA lying in the lower half of the glass and Israel falling through the glass to break beside it. The President of Iran said in his speech, ". . . a world without America and Zionism? But you had best know that this slogan and this goal are attainable, and surely can be achieved . . ." The chief of strategy for Ahmadinejad, Hassan Abbasi, is the architect of Iran's "war preparation plan". He has said:

"We have a strategy drawn up for the destruction of Anglo-Saxon civilization . . . we must make use of everything we have at hand to strike at this front by means of our suicide operations or means of our missiles. There are 29 sensitive sites in the U.S. and the West. We have already spied on these sites and we know how we are going to attack them. . . . Once we have defeated the Anglo-Saxons the rest will run for cover."

With the Ahmadinejad regime in power, regime change appears to be the only option. We have some cards to play in this regard due to the massive unpopularity of the regime, including among many Iranian Shi'ite clerics. Short of the use of force against Iran itself – our last resort but an option that under no circumstances should take off the table – we have two possibilities, mutually supporting.

First, as Reuel Gerecht points out in the above-cited article, success in moving toward a Shi'ite-majority democracy in Iraq will help substantially in undermining Khamenei's and Ahmadinejad's rule as young Iranian Shia see the possibility of living in a much freer society. Thus for a host of reasons success in Iraq is essential.

Second, Ambassador Mark Palmer has written persuasively of how we can engage and work with the Iranian people and Iranian groups struggling for freedom without enhancing the position of, or making concessions to, the Iranian government. Such efforts would probably require more US presence in Iran; one

reasonable approach would be to demand reciprocity with respect to an American interests section in a friendly embassy in Tehran; through such a mechanism Iran has some 50 individuals in the US.

Finally, it would be my judgment that to prepare for the possibility of the need to use force against Iran and to show our national resolve regarding proliferation by Iran and other proliferators such as North Korea we should promptly undertake a major expansion of our armed forces. This would entail a substantial increase in the Defense budget and, in my view, a tax increase would be required to pay for it. We should not balk at this – earlier generations have sacrificed much more, even outside the context of fighting hot wars.

For example, in the early 1960's before the Vietnam War we were spending over 9 per cent of GDP on Defense (because we had shifted strategy from massive retaliation to flexible response, requiring substantially more conventional forces). This would be the equivalent of a Defense budget of well over a trillion dollars in today's \$11+ trillion American economy. Admittedly in the early 60's the way we cared for the elderly was far more a matter of individual family responsibility (and some neglect) and the demographics were different, so Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid did not affect the federal budget as they do now. But we cannot let the political decisions made in the last few generations about how the nation is to care for its elderly undermine our willingness to protect ourselves, and to pay for this protection.

Appeasement, whatever euphemism is used, of Iran or any other dictatorship determined to deploy nuclear weapons and support terror will not work any better than it did in the 1930's. It is time to stop deluding ourselves that security can be obtained in today's world on the cheap and without sacrifice. It cannot be.