

enough HEU for a weapon sometime during the 2010-2015 time frame. (INR [State Department Bureau of Intelligence and Research] judges Iran is unlikely to achieve this capability before 2013 because of foreseeable technical and programmatic problems.)'

PRESSURE POINTS:

Journalists and politicians should be reminded that, according to the NIE, Iran is 'very unlikely' to be 'technically capable' of producing weapons-grade uranium before 2010, and may not be able to do so until 2015.

They should also be forcefully reminded that so long as Iran is inspected by the IAEA, especially if Tehran agrees to a rigorous Additional Protocol monitoring system, the civilian uranium enrichment facilities cannot be used to generate material for weapons.

They should be asked if there is any information indicating that Iran has overcome its heavy metal contamination in its uranium ore.

If not, they should be informed of the publicly-available evidence which suggests that Iran is physically incapable of producing weapons-grade uranium, quite apart from the technical and logistical challenges of operating large numbers of centrifuges successfully.

THE IAEA REPORT

The headline news about the NIE was its findings, based on secret new evidence (probably provided by a high-level defector) that **Iran does not have a nuclear weapons programme**, and has not had such a programme since 2003. (There are some questions about quite what US intelligence means by a 'nuclear weapons programme' - exactly what it thinks Iran was doing before 2003.)

It is widely believed that the NIE has averted the immediate prospect of US military action. However, the threat has not gone away entirely.

The next turning point in the US-Iran crisis will be the publication of the International Atomic Energy Agency's report on Iran's past nuclear activities, now expected in mid-February. The indications are that the IAEA will largely if not entirely clear Iran, and the US will seek to undermine the inspectors. Where have we heard that before?

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IRAN

**THE US NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE
CHANGES THE PICTURE ON THE IRAN CRISIS**
JNV Anti-War Briefing 110 (31 January 2008)

The latest report from US intelligence on Iran's nuclear programme gives concerned citizens the opportunity to focus the public's attention on the possibility of a negotiated solution to the Iran crisis; and to emphasize the importance of uranium ore contamination as an obstacle to any effort to develop an Iranian nuclear weapon.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

One crucial sentence in the US National Intelligence Estimate (published on 3 December 2007) points to the possibility of a negotiated solution.

Iran's leaders might be persuaded to give up any ambition to develop nuclear weapons, says the NIE, if there were (a) 'threats of intensified international scrutiny and pressures', along with (b) 'opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals for regional influence' by non-nuclear means.

This is followed by the Big Lie of the NIE: 'It is difficult to specify what such a combination might be.'

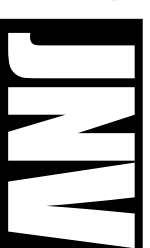
In fact, we do have a very good idea what carrots Iran might respond to, because they were set out in considerable detail by Iran in 2003.

THE GRAND BARGAIN

In that year, Iran sent a secret negotiating proposal to the State Department (via the Swiss government), laying out a broad array of concessions it was willing to make to Washington, including an end to military support for the militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah, tighter controls on its nuclear programme and Iranian

support for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine question (recognizing Israel for the first time).

In return, Iran sought an end to US financial and economic sanctions, full access to peaceful nuclear technology and a recognition of Iran's 'legitimate



RESISTING WAR
AND TERROR

security interests', among other goals <<http://tinyurl.com/gvdsu>>.

Flynt Leverett, then a senior director on the US National Security Council staff, saw the Iranian proposal. He described it as "a serious effort, a respectable effort to lay out a comprehensive agenda for U.S.-Iranian rapprochement" <<http://tinyurl.com/kqcb>>.

Leverett added: "The message had been approved by all the highest levels of authority. They wanted us to deal with sanctions, security guarantees, normalization of relations, and support for integration of Iran into the World Trade Organization" <<http://tinyurl.com/pbncc>>.

Crucially, Iran sought a security guarantee from the United States, a cast-iron commitment not to try to overthrow the Iranian government, in particular a promise not to invade or attack Iran.

This was the central element of the 'grand bargain' offered by Iran, as this line from the proposed 2003 'roadmap' indicates: 'US refrains from supporting change of the political system by direct interference from outside'. (A pdf of the 2003 fax is available at <<http://tinyurl.com/2kk618>>.)

PRESSURE POINTS:

Journalists and politicians should be reminded of the 2003 offer from Iran.

Particularly because the 3 December US National Intelligence Estimate says that Tehran might be persuaded to forego nuclear weapons if offered 'opportunities for Iran to achieve its security, prestige, and goals for regional influence' by non-nuclear means.

Iran explained to Washington what it wanted in terms of 'security, prestige and goals for regional influence' in 2003.

Therefore, to strengthen regional security, and the global nonproliferation system, and to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the agenda set out in the 2003 negotiating offer should be pursued rather than dismissed out of hand.

IS AN IRANIAN BOMB POSSIBLE?

Hawks on both sides of the Atlantic have pointed to the increasing number of centrifuges being operated by Iran as a sign of its increasing uranium enrichment capability, allegedly creating a springboard to the early development of an Iranian nuclear bomb.

The latest US National Intelligence Estimate indicates that there are significant technical problems for any Iranian bomb programme dependent on gas centrifuge enrichment, which will not be overcome for many years.

It is possible that these problems include the difficulties created by contamination of Iranian uranium ore by molybdenum and other heavy

metals. That is the opinion of former British nuclear weapons scientist Frank Barnaby.

Barnaby, now an analyst with the Oxford Research Group, states that: "These impurities could condense and block pipes and valves in the gas centrifuges. In spite of this problem, the Iranians should be able to enrich uranium to the low enrichment needed for civil nuclear-power reactor fuel. But they would not be able to enrich above about 20% in uranium-235. Therefore, Iran would not be able to produce uranium enriched enough for use in nuclear weapons unless most of the molybdenum was removed." (*Would Airstrikes Work?* <<http://tinyurl.com/2vsjzb>>)

OTHER VIEWS

Science magazine reported in 2006: 'According to an official at the U.S. State Department, Iran has struggled to convert [uranium fluoride] UF4 into UF6, a dangerous process [necessary to uranium enrichment] involving highly toxic and corrosive fluorine gas. The official also claims that Iranian UF4 is tainted with large amounts of molybdenum and other heavy metals. These oxygen fluoride impurities in UF6 "might condense" and thereby "risk blockages" of valves and piping, an IAEA specialist told *Science*.

'**Reducing impurities to allow production of uranium fuel for peaceful uses, containing a few percent U-235, should not be a huge challenge**, according to experts. But more sophisticated equipment is required to reduce impurities enough to make highly enriched uranium, containing 20% or more U-235. Only a handful of countries can do it. For a weapons effort, filtering out molybdenum "is a fairly significant problem," says nuclear nonproliferation expert Rose Gottemoeller, director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's Moscow office.' (Richard Stone, 'Iran's Trouble With Molybdenum May Give Diplomacy a Second Chance', *Science*, 13 January 2006)

NIE REALISM

The NIE suggests that Iran may not be able to produce weapons-grade uranium before 2013: 'We assess centrifuge enrichment is how Iran probably could first produce enough fissile material for a weapon, if it decides to do so.... we judge with moderate confidence [Iran] still faces significant technical problems operating [its centrifuges].

'We judge with moderate confidence that the earliest possible date Iran would be technically capable of producing enough HEU for a weapon is late 2009, but that this is **very unlikely**. We judge with moderate confidence Iran probably would be technically capable of producing