

## **Iran's Nuclear Threat**

On March 24, just hours after Iran announced the capture of 15 British soldiers, claiming that their vessel had violated Iran's territorial waters, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1747, which imposed further sanctions on the Iranian regime for its continuation of uranium enrichment activities. The moderately tougher sanctions include banning Iranian arms exports, and freezing the assets of 28 people and organizations involved in Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

About a third of those are linked to the Revolutionary Guard, who are accused of supplying new and more powerful improvised explosives (IED'S) planted by insurgent groups in Iraq against American and coalition forces there and supplying advanced missiles and technical support to terrorist groups Hezbollah and Hamas, undermining the fragile government in Beirut and strengthening forces opposed to Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

Not surprisingly, Iran announced on Sunday that it was partially suspending co-operation with the UN's nuclear watchdog agency, citing the "illegal and bullying" United Nations Security Council decision while Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad characterized the resolution as illegal and declared that Iran's nuclear program will not be halted.

The threat posed by Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its sponsorship of terrorism cannot be underestimated. It is imperative to realize that a nuclear Iran is a threat to the whole Middle East, not only to Israel. Furthermore, Iran's nuclear weapons program has implications for global security and peace. It threatens the stability of the entire region by potentially creating a dangerous nuclear arms race.

In January, Saudi Arabia suggested that it would pursue nuclear technology if Iran continued to develop its nuclear program, and a host of other moderate Arab nations joined the call. For these countries, the current security arrangements, based on conventional weapons capability and American security guarantees, are not enough to face a nuclear Iran. In their mind, an Iranian bomb can only be countered with an Arab one, even if this means an unstable nuclear Middle East.

Whether the recently adopted Security Council sanctions will actually materialize into concrete actions that will generate a change in the Iranian regime remains to be seen. Therefore, it is imperative that the world community put this issue at the top of its priority list. Individual countries must unify in one voice and apply the necessary diplomatic and economic measures to meet the challenges posed by Iran.

There is a good indication that international pressure can be effective. The current nuclear policies of the Ahmadinejad regime are coming under increased criticism by some Iranian sectors concerned about the increasing isolation the country is facing and the deteriorating economic situation. But it is critical to increase and fine-tune the efforts to generate change quickly. The brazen abduction of British soldiers and televised "confession" on Iranian TV is yet another example of the ruthlessness of this regime. The international community has a clear mandate and it is time to take action.

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