



SECURITY COUNCIL

**Collective Response to the Discovery of a New Uranium
Enrichment Facility in Iran**

BACKGROUND PAPER

**Hitesh Chugh
Cara Fanning**

Mandate

The United Nations Security Council has a primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security under Chapter V, Article XXIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter. The council can determine the existence of threats to international peace and security and, following such confirmation, can consider political, diplomatic and economic avenues of response to address the problem at hand. However the UN Security Council is the only body that has the power to authorise the legitimate use of force; and unlike other UN bodies, Security Council resolutions that have been passed are binding and must be adopted by all members.

The Security Council consists of fifteen members, five of which are permanent members- France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. These permanent members have the power to veto the adoption of Security Council resolutions. The remaining members are rotated based on two year terms and are non-permanent.

Background


Historical Context

Iran's nuclear program is one of the most contentious issues within not just the Middle East but of the world as a whole. Where some states have continued to defy the general trend towards nuclear non-proliferation, Tehran has insisted that it has a right to develop a peaceful nuclear program and has rejected Western suspicions that it is seeking to build a nuclear weapon.

The history of Iran's nuclear program dates back to 1950 and the 60's during the reign of the Shah. However it was quickly abandoned in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution. Then in August 2002 the Paris based Iranian opposition group The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) revealed the existence of an undeclared uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water plant at near Arak. The government of Mohammed Khatami faced with the possibility of a referral to the UN Security Council. Instead chose to cooperate with negotiations lead by the EU-3 (France, Germany, and Great Britain). Tehran agreed to suspend its enrichment of uranium and permitted the entry of inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). At the same time continuing talks with the EU-3.

Nevertheless, in August 2005, with the election of conservative hard liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad replacing the relatively moderate Khatami, Iran informed the IAEA that it would resume the conversion of uranium ore at its Esfahan facility, a prelude to uranium enrichment. This lead to a strong condemnation from both the IAEA and the international community. (See Appendix for an explanation of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle)

Ahmadinejad's election and subsequent but controversial re election has created an ominous cloud over the Middle East. In an infamous speech to 3000 students in Tehran said that "Israel must be wiped off the map". These



comments coupled with Iran's continual defiance of the international community have left Israel feeling increasingly threatened. During an interview last year Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the challenge posed by Iran stands as a "hinge of history". He added that "Western civilisation" would have failed should Iran develop a nuclear weapon.

Important UN Documents

From 2005- 2008 the UN Security Council passed no less than five resolutions demanding that Iran suspend all enrichment related activities.

While Resolution 1696 only demanded Iran cease all enrichment and threatened sanctions. Resolution 1737 blocked the import and export of sensitive nuclear and ballistic missile material. As well as the training of Iranian nationals in disciplines that would contribute to its nuclear program. Resolution 1747 targeted Iran's financial sector calling upon States to not enter into any new commitments to grants and financial assistance with the Government of Iran. In addition Resolution 1803 singled out Bank Melli and Bank Saderat. Finally Resolution 1835 served as reminder of Iran's repeated indiscretions a call to come to a negotiated solution.

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

Under the terms of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Iran as signatory and classified as non nuclear weapon state is obliged to abide its rules. Article 3 section 1 of the NPT states that.

1. Each non-nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes to accept safeguards, as set forth in an agreement to be negotiated and concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency in accordance with the Statute of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Agency's safeguards system, for the exclusive purpose of verification of the fulfilment of its obligations assumed under this Treaty with a view to preventing diversion of nuclear energy from peaceful uses to nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Procedures for the safeguards required by this Article shall be followed with respect to source or special fissionable material whether it is being produced, processed or used in any principal nuclear facility or is outside any such facility. The safeguards required by this Article shall be applied on all source or special fissionable material in all peaceful nuclear activities within the territory of such State, under its jurisdiction, or carried out under its control anywhere.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been crucial in negotiations over the years.

In January 2010 Tehran rejected an IAEA proposal made in October 2009 which would allow it to send 75 percent of its low enriched uranium (LEU) to Russia and France. To be turned into fuel for a Tehran medical research reactor. Then IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei continued to seek a compromise to rescue the deal even suggesting that Iran send its LEU to a third country, with Turkey saying it would be willing to assist. Tehran also publicly acknowledged the

Hypothetical Scenario

It is December the 10th 2010. Over the past few months negotiations over increased sanctions on Iran have stagnated. The so called P5 + 1, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, Germany, Russia and China have so far failed to reach an agreement over increased measures against Tehran.

REVEALED: Iran's Clandestine Nuclear Weapons Lab



Fri Dec 20, 2010 10:29am GM

By Tom Jones and Christopher Scott

Tehran (Reuters). The Iranian exile group the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) has revealed to Reuters the true operations of the Gorgan Al-Kabir Center. The Gorgan facility is not only a new undeclared enrichment facility, but it is also an installation devoted to weapons research.

It's location, near the Shahrud missile testing grounds, has raised fears that Iran has developed the technology to mount a nuclear warhead into the nose cone of a ballistic missile. There are also unconfirmed reports of an underground rail link between the Gorgan facility and the Shahrud testing grounds.

This is not the first time the NCRI has ascertained the location of one of Tehran's undeclared facilities since it was they who revealed in 2002 the existence of a uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and a heavy water plant at near Arak.



Caption: Gorgan al-Kabir Center. Source: ISIS.

Available at <http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/images/NATANZ1.JPG>

Gorgan Knot

The BBC reports the reactions of the major powers following yesterday's revelation of Tehran's secret research lab.

A reaction from the US came swiftly, President Barack Obama on a rescheduled visit to Australia, called an urgent press conference. In it he said "The United States and its allies will not stand still while the government in Tehran continues to callously and recklessly disregard the demands of the Security Council and the verdicts of the IAEA. The time for decisive action has come, and we are keeping open all options including collective action under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter".

The recent developments have greatly troubled Israel which views Iran as a clear threat to its national security. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a statement reaffirmed Israel's right to defend itself from any existential threat.

IAEA Chief Yukiya Amano from Vienna says the situation is deeply troubling. "Iran is not allaying the fears of its nuclear program rather it is only heightening and confirming the suspicions of other member states. I call the government of Iran to once again be open and transparent with all of its uranium enrichment activities".

Chinese President Hu Jintao, mindful of Beijing's relationship with Tehran, urged calm and that the international community must resolve the situation through peaceful means.

In a fiery speech Iran President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad reaffirmed Iran's inalienable right to peaceful nuclear technology has been the subject of "the most extensive and intensive campaign of denial, obstruction, intervention and misinformation" and that the international community has been subject to "bias, politicised and exaggerated information" on the Iranian nuclear program and activities.

The United Nations Security Council, has been called into an urgent meeting to discuss the current situation. The whole world is holding its breath, in anticipation of the outcome of these last ditch talks.

Possible Solutions

Given the nature of this new enrichment plant, and the political implications Iran's possession of such a facility has on signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Security Council must consider measures outlined in Chapter 6 and 7 of the UN Charter.

A Diplomatic Response

Pure political avenues seek to gain Iran's compliance through the acceptance and ratification of treaties, most notably the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), by offering security assurances and legitimacy. While there have been bilateral initiatives, the most effective measures are those conducted multilaterally through the Security Council which "has a duty to stop non-democratic regimes from acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction" (Slaughter 2004: 78). Difficulties can arise with this approach, with Iran seeking aims that were otherwise unavailable to it by using "high-stakes brinkmanship" (Fitzpatrick 2006: 68) such as threatening to leave the NPT and continuing with its nuclear development.

The United States "will participate in negotiations should Tehran suspend its enrichment activities" (Dueck and Takeyh 2007: 202) as well as comply with the 9/11 Commission Report recommendation of a multilateral approach for dealing with the threat of terrorism, a key part of which is to remove sanctuaries that these non-state actors use (9/11 Commission Report 2004: 379). The significance of this step is that Iran is identified as being the "most active sponsor of terrorism" (O'Rourke 2004: 76), including providing active support to HAMAS against Israel (Harding and Pettiford 2003: 71). Once these obstacles are overcome the international community can:

*"...re-forge and reform a genuinely multilateral decision making process that can act early and decisively in the face of global threats and that can protect both the human and the state in the quest for global security."
(Slaughter 2004: 85)*

An important political commitment would be to offer Iran security assurances through multilateral security arrangements "building confidence and alleviating threat perceptions" in the Middle East (Arnett 1998: 445), thereby removing the need for a nuclear deterrence.

Iran was the victim of many chemical weapon attacks by Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war (Slaughter 2004: 80), the impact of these attacks nurtured the Iranian belief that a nuclear deterrence would prevent similar attacks in the future (Taremi 2005: 96) on the understanding that a nuclear capacity can compensate for conventional weakness (Freedman 2009: 11). This perceived necessity for nuclear deterrent is voiced by former Pakistani leader Bhutto, "If India builds the bomb, we will eat grass of leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one for our own." (Ramberg 2006: 53). As Iran has very legitimate security concerns, any realistic solution will need to include a security guarantee by the United States (Fitzpatrick 2006: 76) as "regime change ... will not necessarily lead to the altering of intentions and nuclear restraint if the underlying motivations for proliferation ... remain unaddressed" (Litwak 2003: 13, 22). The secondary advantage to engaging in a security arrangement is that it has the ability to deal with contemporary non-state threats (Ritchie 2009:92, Muller 2008: 70) while a nuclear capacity can deter state based terror only (Ritchie 2009:83).

An Economic Response

In coming up with a draft resolution you will also need to consider the viability of economic sanctions. Sanctions are the intermediate measure of coercive policy, being the important stage between open diplomacy and the threat or actual use of military force (Gottemoeller 2007: 100). The issue here being that Iran has already been the subject of numerous sanctions imposed by Security Council resolutions 1737 (2006), 1747 (2007), 1803 (2008) and 1835 (2008). The current situation implies that these resolutions, aimed at finding a diplomatic and economic solution to the problem at hand, have had little or no effect.

When making the decision whether or not to impose sanctions you will also need to consider the potential this solution has to create a humanitarian crisis, as it did in Iraq in the 1990s. Furthermore, the accusations of electoral fraud and the coinciding protests after the re-election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad last year, throws the legitimacy of the Iranian government into question. Whilst respecting the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran, you need to consider that the development of a nuclear facility was a decision by a government not necessarily supported by the majority of the people it is supposed to represent.

Is there a way to target sanctions to the elite government decision-makers in order to pressure them into changing their policies without harming the civilian population?


A Military Intervention

Article 51 of the UN Charter defines the right of self defence, which constitutes the major exception of the prohibition of resource to force, as an inherent right. In some countries and U.S. states, the concept of "pre-emptive" self defense is limited by a requirement that the threat be imminent. Thus, lawful "pre-emptive" self defense is simply the act of conducting a first strike in a situation that has reached a point of no hope for de-escalation or escape.

The use of military force in such diplomatic discourse is somewhat constrained as it revolves around the high cost and consequences of such action. In regards to Iran, it presents with two further options:

1. The Heavy-Water reactor is being used to enrich uranium such that it will be weapons grade, therefore presenting casus belli for the Security Council- it means there are very limited diplomatic solutions available;
2. The Heavy-Water reactor is being used to further enrich Uranium for more efficient energy production and use.

Military action could potentially rule out future dealings with Iran, relations with whom were significantly strained by the United States labelling them among the "axis of evil" and US attacks on Iran "stimulate and serve to legitimize Iranian interest in a long-range missile force". Threat of US attack validates Iranian belief that it needs nuclear weapons to deter attack. The perceived need for nuclear weapons validates US perception that it may need to attack.



On 7 June 1981, Israeli intelligence agencies authorised an airstrike against an Iranian nuclear facility in Osiraq out of fear the fuel would be used to create nuclear weapons. However, this was condemned by the international community and the Security Council passed resolution 487 which “strongly condemns the military attack by Israel in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the norms of International conduct.”

However this is contrary to the view presented by Israel, as they are more directly threatened by the creation of an Iranian nuclear missile. In 2008, Deputy Prime Minister Shaul Mofaz asserted that the [United Nations Security Council](#) and the international community have a duty and responsibility to clarify to Iran, through drastic measures, that the repercussions of their continued pursuit of nuclear weapons will be devastating. In the same interview, Mofaz also made more direct threats to Iran's nuclear facilities, pertaining to an attack on facilities if Iran continues with its nuclear weapons programme.

Summary of Key Issues

- Will the Security Council issue a joint statement condemning Iran's recent actions?
- Should it authorise military intervention?
- Is there a way to target sanctions to the elite government decision-makers in order to pressure them into changing their policies without harming the civilian population?

Disclaimer

Please note that all references to Reuters and/or the BBC are purely fictional and in no way reflect the views of either news correspondents. The articles are strictly for the purposes of the hypothetical scenario of the model Security Council at the Brisbane Model United Nations Conference 2010.

Appendix

The Nuclear Fuel Cycle

The main material used to fuel both nuclear reactors and provide the energy for a basic nuclear weapon is uranium 235.

1. Mining-

Uranium can be extracted from the Earth using either underground or open cast mines. Uranium 235 (u-235) is an isotope which is a atom with the same number of protons but different a different number of neutrons. When uranium 235 is split it emits 2- 3 neutrons, add enough u-235 atoms and you obtain a “critical mass”. Which will allow a self sustaining chain reaction necessary to power either a nuclear reactor or fuel a nuclear explosion. Out of every 1000 uranium atoms only 7 of them are u-235 atoms the rest are heavier u-238 atoms.

2. Conversion-

Once ore has been extracted it is taken to a mill to be ground into a fine powder, then purified using a chemical process then reconstituted into a form known as "yellow cake". The goal is to increase the number of u-235 atoms (enrichment) so the "yellow cake" is then dissolved in nitric acid, then heated to become uranium hexafluoride gas.

3. Enrichment-

The most common method of enrichment is through a gas centrifuge. Uranium hexafluoride gas is spun at high speeds with the lighter u-235 atoms floating to the top while the heavier u-238 are collected at the bottom. The enriched u-235 atoms are then fed into another centrifuge and the process is repeated. For a nuclear reactor, uranium needs to be enriched to around 2-3% u-235 atoms. While for nuclear weapon its essential to have at least 90% enriched u-235 atoms.

For a more detailed explanation of the Nuclear Fuel Cycle visit:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/sci_nat/05/nuclear_fuel/html/mining.stm

Recommended Reading

Reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

<http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Focus/IaealIran/index.shtml>

Especially the recent Report from February this year

<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2010/gov2010-10.pdf>

November 2009 Report

<http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2009/gov2009-74.pdf>

Reports concerning Iran from the Institute of Science and International Security

<http://isis-online.org/countries/category/iran/>

An overview and general information on Iran's Nuclear Program from the New York Times.

<http://www.nytimes.com/info/iran-nuclear-program/?inline=nyt-classifier>

Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty-

<http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2005/npttreaty.htm>

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