

U.S. and Israel prepare for military action against Iran

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 Saturday, 31 October 2009
 Last Updated Saturday, 31 October 2009

Once again, Iran made a mockery of nuclear containment negotiations, rejecting a proposal from the International Atomic Energy Agency (I.A.E.A.) on Wednesday that was brokered by the United Nations. Iran first stalled for a week, then publicly declared they would cooperate, only to reverse course.

Yet, change might be in the air because, according to STRATFOR global intelligence, the U.S., Israel and other Western allies are taking steps that appear eerily similar to war preparations. These actions include the Administration trying to get authorization to tap the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) which is something that would only happen during a time of war; U.S. and Israel conducting large scale military and ballistic missile exercises; and direct personal messages being delivered from senior U.S. and Israeli officials to Moscow that the military option is on the table as a path to halting Iran's nuclear program. However, the mystery remains as to whether or not these movements are legitimate threats or simple posturing.

According to the deal designed to curtail Iran's nuclear ambitions, Iran would transfer a major portion of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium to Russia for further processing. Russia would return the material to Iran in the form of fuel plates which could only be used for fuel research and medical purposes. Iran has ceaselessly asserted that they are developing nuclear capabilities for peaceful applications and this proposal calls their bluff. If what Iran has been saying for years is true, why does the I.A.E.A.'s proposal bother them so?

Why? Because they are lying. Quite a few American officials are concerned Iran is trying to run out the clock and continue processing uranium so they can either build a weapon or attain "breakout capacity", which is the ability to build a nuclear weapon within a few months.

As it stands today, Iran has leverage because of their mutually beneficial business relationship with Russia, who has been unwilling to join the other UN countries in levying stricter sanctions against Iran. The U.S. House of Representatives recently passed the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act, which would make it easier for state and local governments and pension funds to divest from companies assisting Iran's energy sector. However, without Russia's cooperation economic sanctions would continue to be ineffectual.

Iran has improved its bargaining position in recent years, and Ahmadinejad gloated about this on Thursday according to Time Magazine:

Iran had managed to shift the debate from whether or not Iran should be allowed to enrich uranium to measures to safeguard its enriched uranium stockpiles from being used in a weapons program. Ahmadinejad proclaimed that diplomatic achievement when he appeared to endorse the nuclear deal on Thursday. "A few years ago, they said we had to completely stop all our nuclear activities," he said in a speech broadcast live on state television. "Now they want nuclear cooperation with the Iranian nation."

But the wheels of war have been churning, and activities currently underway could strengthen the West's negotiating power.

STRATFOR caught wind that the U.S. government was seeking permission to tap into the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, which consists of more than 700 million barrels of crude oil and was designed expressly to keep the country running in the event of a war in an oil-producing region. Interestingly enough, the U.S. is obligated to make reserves available for Israel to purchase in case of an emergency according to the 1975 Second Sinai withdrawal document.

In the Mediterranean, the United States and Israel are conducting their largest and most complex bilateral ballistic missile defense exercises which are primarily intended to counter Iranian missile attacks. One would think this is more than just a coincidence. Israel is already on record as saying that it would launch preemptive strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities if they felt the need. They just need Obama's approval, and it appears they might be closer than ever to getting a green light from the U.S. to launch said attacks.

Not to mention that U.S. National Security Adviser Gen. James Jones went to Moscow on Wednesday and frankly communicated to the Russians that all options are on the table, including military action, to stop Iran from developing nukes. At the same time, former Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni also went to Moscow to deliver a similar message.

Some would think Iran would have to be insane to keep pushing the envelope. Then again they probably are, considering their President is a man who sternly believes the Holocaust never happened. Yet, Iran is surely not going to ignore all of these signals, and pressure is being put on Russia for them to cooperate in implementing sanctions so that they have teeth. Iran will continue its stall tactics but the U.S. and its allies are readying to apply a full court press.

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