

# STOP IRAN

## **The Iranian Nuclear Threat**

**The Islamic Republic of Iran's nearly twenty-year secret nuclear program was exposed by an exile group in 2002, and subsequently confirmed by inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Seven years and four United Nations Security Council Resolutions later, the United States continues to lead the international effort to halt Tehran's uranium enrichment program and other activities that could lead to a nuclear weapon.**

As the leading state sponsor of international terrorism, a nuclear-armed Iran would pose unacceptable threats to global security. Although Iran is rapidly progressing toward nuclear breakout capability, American and internationally imposed sanctions, designed to convince Iran to suspend its nuclear program, are seriously hampering Iran's ability to conduct business abroad and to attract desperately needed investment for its energy sector. Diplomatic approaches by the United States should be accompanied by the threat of much more robust economic, diplomatic and political sanctions to persuade Iran to turn away from its current dangerous course.

### **Iran Nearing a Nuclear-Arms Capability**

In 2006, Iran announced that it had successfully begun enriching uranium. By February 2009, the IAEA released a report showing that Iran has now acquired more than 2,200 pounds of low enriched uranium that—if further enriched to weapons-grade level—is enough for one nuclear bomb. The IAEA report also said Iran was operating more than 5,900 centrifuges—machines that spin at supersonic speeds to enrich the uranium needed to build a nuclear bomb—a 500 percent increase in the number of centrifuges compared with 2007. With these increased enrichment capabilities, Iran is reducing the time it requires to produce enough highly enriched uranium (HEU) for nuclear weapons.

Iran has tested more efficient and advanced centrifuge models and has informed the IAEA that it plans to begin installing additional centrifuges as soon as early 2009. Tehran's stated goal is to assemble more than 50,000 centrifuges for industrial-scale enrichment, which would enable Iran to produce enough HEU for up to 50 nuclear warheads per year.

Tehran has upped its violent rhetoric and military tests, including war games, rocket and missile tests and threats to close the Straits of Hormuz.

### **Iranian Nuclear Activities Have No Civilian Purpose**

In addition, inspectors from the IAEA have uncovered evidence that Iran has carried out a number of nuclear activities with no known civilian energy purposes. Iran has experimented with polonium, an element whose primary use is to trigger nuclear explosions, and continues to block IAEA inspections to numerous nuclear facilities. Iran's Green Salt Project, an alleged clandestine Iranian entity focusing on uranium processing, high explosives and a missile warhead design,

remains a matter of serious concern and critical to an assessment of a possible military dimension to Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has also been conducting research and tests on technologies needed to deliver a nuclear weapon, including the rapid advancement of its long-range ballistic missile and space program. Tehran has also upped its violent rhetoric and military tests including war games, rocket and land-mobile missile tests and threats to close the Straits of Hormuz.

### **A Nuclear Iran Would Destabilize the World**

A nuclear-armed Iran would constitute an existential threat to Israel, but would not merely threaten Israel. It would likely lead to nuclear proliferation elsewhere in the region and around the globe while fundamentally altering the strategic balance of the Middle East, a vital region key to U.S. national security interests.

### **Nuclear Weapons Would Embolden the Regime**

Nuclear weapons would embolden Iran's regime. Iran could seek to further its radical foreign-policy agenda by strengthening its support for terrorist allies like Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah, which are actively working to undermine U.S. peace efforts. If Iran possessed nuclear weapons, it could share this technology with anti-American terrorist groups to carry out attacks against U.S. interests worldwide.

### **A Nuclear Iran Would Destabilize Pro-Western Arab States**

Arab countries with strong ties to the United States are terrified of Iran achieving a nuclear weapons capability. Gulf countries in particular fear that Iran will use its nuclear umbrella to intimidate their governments and radicalize their people. Iran might never need to actually use a nuclear weapon; the mere potential might persuade its neighbors to further distance themselves from the United States.

### **Nuclear Arms, Missiles Would Pose Major Threat to U.S.**

By combining a nuclear weapon with its ballistic missile program—already capable of targeting American troops in the Middle East and parts of Europe—Iran also would pose a serious nuclear threat to the United States and its allies. Such a threat would increase as Iran is able to perfect advanced ballistic missile technology and build missiles capable of striking the United States and Western Europe.

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would likely touch off a regional nuclear arms race.

### **Nuclear Iran Would Spur Regional Arms Race, Kill Non-Proliferation Regime**

Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons also would likely touch off a regional nuclear arms race among other Middle Eastern countries. Indeed, many Arab states have expressed new interest in "peaceful" nuclear programs as Iran continues its nuclear weapons pursuit. This heightened interest in nuclear technology would likely spread beyond the Middle East, marking the death knell of the global non-proliferation regime. A world in which nuclear weapons have spread widely would be a much more dangerous place and exponentially increase the likelihood that such weapons might actually be used.