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SUBJECT: IRAN-IAEA: ISRAELI ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION
THINKING ON NEXT STEPS

Classified By: Ambassador Daniel C. Kurtzer for reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

1. (S) Senior Israeli Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) officials Gideon Frank and Eli Levite told the Ambassador September 8 that a renewed international push on Iran, including referral to the UN Security Council, is necessary, because, based on the response to date of the international community and the IAEA, Iran might otherwise get away with



its nuclear weapons program. Frank and Levite said that referring Iran to the UNSC will only be effective if (a) Iran and the IAEA are obligated to take well-defined interim steps while the UNSC deliberates Iran's case; and (b) the UNSC President's decision -- reflecting the UNSC's view -- incorporates both clear, mandated steps that Iran must take by dates certain, and clear consequences for failure. The Israelis intend to continue aggressive lobbying of Russia to exert more pressure on Iran. Frank and Levite praised continued U.S.-Israel cooperation on Iran and the IAEA, and in countering nuclear terrorism, noting the recent successful visit of a DOE delegation to exchange information on the results of a hypothetical detonation of a radiological device in Israel (septel). Frank and Levite said that cooperation has made it possible for the U.S. and Israel to avoid problems before they arise, and cited as an example previously diverging views on U.S. estimates of Iran's ability to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. END SUMMARY.

IAEC WELCOMES NEW PUSH ON IRAN ...

2. (S) IAEC Principal Deputy Director General (Policy) Eli Levite told the Ambassador September 8 that his late August meetings in Washington gave him the impression that USG concern that the Iranians might get away with stalling is prompting the USG to make a new push for International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) action on Iran. Levite was heartened by expectations that IAEA Director General ElBaradei's upcoming report on Iran -- in conjunction with the combined efforts of the EU3 and USG -- may result in Iran being referred to the UN Security Council.

ADVISES HOW TO MAKE REFERRAL TO UNSC EFFECTIVE

3. (S) IAEC Director General Gideon Frank said he understands that a referral to the UNSC may not necessarily entail punishment for Iran, but might only start a new track of diplomacy with no guaranteed outcome. Frank said a referral that merely opens up discussions with no concrete requirements might dispel the Iranians' anxiety and let the IAEA off the hook. Iran could then use the time necessary for the UNSC to reach a common position on Iran to convert enough UF-6 to yield significant quantities of feed for the enrichment process. He recommended two measures to ensure that this does not happen:

(a) have the referral accompanied by a Board of Governors (BOG) resolution that requires Iran and the IAEA to take well-defined interim actions while the UNSC is deliberating Iran's case. The BOG resolution needs to make it clear that Iran has "failed to yield reassuring answers to a variety of



questions" to date, and must also make it clear to the Iranians what they must do to address uncertainties that have persisted over the last two and a half years.

(b) coordinate with the UNSC President so that his decision -- reflecting the UNSC's view -- makes it clear what Iran has to do by a date certain in order to avoid punishment.

NEXT STEPS ON THE ISRAELI SIDE IN THE UN AND AT THE IAEA

4. (S) Frank observed that the next milestone will be Iranian President Ahmadinejad's appearance before the UNSC the week of September 12. Frank said that the Israeli UN mission will likely be preoccupied with high-level visits and focused on other issues, and would probably find it difficult to respond. He said he is trying to notify "the right people" within the MFA and Prime Minister's office so that the appropriate response can be delivered quickly. Frank praised FM Silvan Shalom's recent discussions on the Iran-IAEA issue with the Spanish and French foreign ministers, saying Shalom made all the right points. The Ambassador advised that PM Sharon should try to connect the Iran nuclear threat issue with Israeli disengagement in his speech at the UNGA by arguing that the risk Israel took for peace through disengagement can only pay off if the heightened existential threat posed by Iran's nuclear program is mitigated. In effect, Sharon would be saying, "I have paid my dues, and yet I still face an over-the-horizon threat in the form of Iran's nuclear ambitions."

5. (S) Regarding IAEA Director General ElBaradei's anticipated report on Iran -- which the Israelis understand may be released on September 14 -- Frank said Israel wants to ensure that the report is accompanied by an explanation of what it contains. If the Israelis get what they want, readers will be led "through a process of guided reading" to certain conclusions that ElBaradei appears reluctant to draw, based on his reports to date. Frank said the IAEA says it is "not in a position to be able to write about undeclared activities." Frank termed "regrettable" the IAEA's inability to hold Iran accountable, citing its silence in reaction to Iranian chief nuclear negotiator Rohani's recent statement that whatever activity Iran had recently suspended, it did so because Iran had no need for the activity. Frank said he was pleased that the French expressed outrage, but lamented that there should have been more outrage from the international community, observing that the French reaction never made the press.

NEXT STEPS IN ISRAEL'S DIALOGUE WITH THE RUSSIANS



6. (S) Levite said PM Sharon is definitely meeting with Putin on the margins of the UNGA. Frank will meet with the Russians in Vienna during an upcoming IAEA conference there. Frank said he is also trying to arrange a meeting between the Israeli and Russian National Security Councils as soon as possible, possibly on September 25 in Moscow. Israel's goal, he clarified, is to "hit every single guy in their system." The Ambassador observed that Putin seems curious about what he will be able to achieve as G-8 President when Russia assumes the presidency. This gives the U.S., Israel and other like-minded countries the opportunity to say, "If you want to be a player in the Middle East, you need to be responsible in your relations with Iran." Levite wondered aloud what Russia's motives are in its relations with Iran. The Ambassador suggested that much of what Russia does with Iran has to do with recovering old financial debts that extend back to Soviet relations with the Middle East.

ISRAEL GRATEFUL FOR COOPERATION ON NUCLEAR ISSUES

7. (S) Frank assessed U.S.-Israel cooperation on dealing with Iran's nuclear program -- in capitals and in Vienna -- as very good and expressed his hope that it would remain that way. The Ambassador agreed, observing that such cooperation allowed the U.S. and Israel to deal with differences before they could turn into problems. One example was how the two sides treated the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate on how long it would take Iran to acquire a nuclear weapons capability. Levite said that based on inquiries in Washington, the GOI now assesses that Iran is currently five years away from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, but that beyond that, there are many uncertainties.

8. (S) Acknowledging difficulty in assessing the situation in Iran, Levite asked the Ambassador what the U.S would do to try to understand Iran better if it were in Israel's situation. The Ambassador replied that Israel might consider looking to the Gulf States -- particularly the United Arab Emirates -- as barometers for assessing Iran. Unlike Egypt and Saudi Arabia, their domestic situations allow their governments to react to developments in Iran that can provide useful indicators. The Ambassador observed that the USG watches Iran from the Gulf, and that Israel's assets there are reliable as well.

9. (C) Levite praised U.S.-Israel cooperation on other nuclear-related projects, noting a successful visit by a DOE delegation in early September (septel) to exchange information on the results of a hypothetical detonation of a radiological device in Tel Aviv. He expressed his hope that the level and content of the cooperation would continue.



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