

# Israel Finds Huge Concerns in Emerging 'Bad Deal' With Iran

Israeli government officials in Jerusalem are not hiding their concerns about the progress in the ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and world powers, particularly in light of *The Associated Press* report on Monday that exposed the details of the emerging agreement.

According to the *AP* report, the deal would clamp down on Iran's nuclear activities for at least 10 years but then slowly ease restrictions on programs that could be used to make nuclear weapons.

"We made progress," U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Monday as he bade farewell in Geneva to members of the American delegation at the table with Iran. More discussions between Iran and the P5+1 nations were set for next Monday, a senior U.S. official said.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the sides found "a better understanding" at the negotiating table.

The deadline for a framework agreement is March 31.

Western officials familiar with the talks cited movement but also described the discussions as a moving target, meaning changes in any one area would have repercussions for other parts of the negotiation.

The core idea would be to reward Iran for good behavior over the last years of any agreement, gradually lifting constraints on its uranium enrichment and slowly easing economic sanctions.

The U.S. initially sought restrictions lasting up to 20 years; Iran has pushed for less than a decade. The prospective deal

appears to be somewhere in the middle.

One variation being discussed would place at least a 10-year regime of strict controls on Iran's uranium enrichment. If Iran complied, the restrictions would be gradually lifted over the final five years.

One issue critics are certain to focus on: Once the deal expires, Iran could theoretically ramp up enrichment to whatever level it wanted.

Experts say Iran already could produce the equivalent of one weapon's worth of enriched uranium with its present operating 10,000 centrifuges. Several officials spoke of 6,500 centrifuges as a potential point of compromise, with the U.S. trying to restrict them to Iran's mainstay IR-1 model instead of more advanced machines.

However, Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said last year that his country needed to increase its output equivalent to at least 190,000 of its present-day centrifuges.

Under a possible agreement, Iran also would be forced to ship out most of the enriched uranium it produced or change it to a form that would be difficult to convert for weapons use. It takes about one ton of low-enriched uranium to process into a nuclear weapon, and officials said that Iran could be restricted to an enriched stockpile of no more than about 700 pounds.

The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency would have responsibility for monitoring, and any deal would depend on technical safeguards rather than Iranian guarantees.

The IAEA already is monitoring Iranian compliance with an interim agreement that came into force a year ago. Separately, it also oversees Iran's nuclear programs to ensure they remain peaceful.

For the U.S., the goal is to extend to at least a year the period that Iran would need to surreptitiously “break out” toward nuclear weapons development.

The *AP* report makes no mention of the Fordo underground nuclear facility or the Arak heavy-water reactor.

Israeli officials reacted with alarm to the *AP* report. Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon said, “The agreement with Iran, as it is being formulated now, is a great danger to the peace of the Western world and threatens Israel’s security. This bad emerging deal would enable Iran to free itself from the economic siege and continue to enrich uranium as well. We will not compromise the security of Israel’s citizens. We will do everything we can and voice on every stage the expected dangers, as [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] will do next week in an important speech to Congress.”

International Relations, Intelligence and Strategic Affairs Minister Yuval Steinitz called the reports of the emerging agreement “worrying,” saying such a deal would allow Iran to become a “nuclear threshold state.”

“We hope world powers refrain from signing such a deal,” Steinitz said.

Economy and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett said, “These are decisive days in the history of the free world. When there is a nuclear attack in the U.S. or Europe in five to 10 years, the world will look back at these days as the fateful time when it could have been thwarted. A few years ago, we had the ‘Arab Spring.’ Now, we have the ‘Nuclear Spring.’ If Iran gets nuclear weapons, there will be a nuclear arms race in the entire region—Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other countries. But it’s not too late. I call for all means necessary to be used to prevent a nuclear Iran.”

A source close to Netanyahu said Monday night, “Indeed, we believed the deal would go in the direction of a bad deal that

endangers not only Israel, but also the entire region and the world. Congress could be the last barrier to stop a bad deal. This clarifies the need for the prime minister's trip to Washington at the start of next week to address Congress. The timing of the trip is critical, as there appears to be an attempt to reach a framework agreement between world powers and Iran by the end of March."

Meanwhile, *The Guardian* and *Al Jazeera* published a purported secret cable on Monday that they claimed indicated a gap in the positions of Netanyahu and the Mossad regarding the Iranian nuclear program.

According to the report, the October 2012 cable quoted the Mossad as saying, "Even though Iran has accumulated enough 5 percent enriched uranium for several bombs, and has enriched some of it to 20 percent, it does not appear to be ready to enrich it to higher levels.

"Bottom line: Though Iran at this stage is not performing the activity necessary to produce weapons, it is working to close gaps in areas that appear legitimate such as enrichment, reactors, which will reduce the time required to produce weapons from the time the instruction is actually given."

The news organizations said the document was a Mossad assessment shared with South African intelligence, part of a trove of leaked spy cables sent by several different intelligence agencies, including the CIA and Russian intelligence.

In September 2012, during a speech at the U.N., Netanyahu held up a cartoon drawing of a bomb and said Iran was moving ahead with plans that would allow it to potentially build a nuclear bomb within a year or so. The diagram showed escalating levels of uranium enrichment and Netanyahu pulled out a red marker and drew a line across what he said was a threshold which Israel could not tolerate—uranium enrichment to 90 percent,

the level needed to make an atomic bomb.

“By next spring, at most by next summer at current enrichment rates, they will have finished the medium enrichment and move on to the final stage,” Netanyahu said. “From there, it’s only a few months, possibly a few weeks before they get enough enriched uranium for the first bomb.”

He said his assessment was not based on “military intelligence,” but on publicly available U.N. reports.

An Israeli official said on Monday there was “no discrepancy” between Netanyahu’s assessment and the unverified document, noting that the supposed Mossad quotes indicated Iran was ‘working to close gaps in areas that appear legitimate such as enrichment, reactors, which will reduce the time required to produce weapons from the time the instruction is actually given.’”

“This was exactly the prime minister’s point in his address to the U.N. in 2012,” the official said.

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