

# Questions About Iran Framework Agreement

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*JINSA's Gemunder Center Iran Task Force*

Co-Chairs Ambassador Eric Edelman and Ambassador Dennis Ross  
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# Overview

Last month JINSA's Gemunder Center Iran Task Force released a report detailing concerns about Iran's nuclear program that need to be resolved to ensure an acceptable final deal. With the April 2 announcement of a framework for a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPA), it is now important to assess whether these concerns have been addressed. This is necessary to determine which issues remain to be settled if the United States hopes to secure a deal that prevents a nuclear weapons-capable Iran.

There is no single authoritative framework – Iran, the United States and others have offered differing official interpretations of key parameters – and the final details of a prospective comprehensive agreement remain to be hammered out. Nevertheless, the various framework agreements include notable advances – including reductions of stockpiles and stronger inspections – but also a number of serious concerns, including: Iran's ability to maintain significant enrichment capacity; the lack of resolution on possible military dimensions (PMD) and ballistic missiles; and the ultimate expiration of key restrictions after 10-15 years. Furthermore, beyond the tentative outlines of the April 2 announcements, the fundamental question remains unanswered as to how a comprehensive agreement would uphold official U.S. policy to eliminate Iran's capability to produce nuclear weapons.

## Key Concerns

### *Pathway to a Bomb: Uranium*

#### **WOULD IRAN SHIP OUT ITS LOW-ENRICHED URANIUM (LEU) STOCKPILES?**

Iran's stockpile would not exceed 300 kilograms (kg) of 3.67 percent LEU for 15 years.

#### *Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- What happens to Iran's remaining LEU (3.5 and 20 percent) stockpiles? Would it:
  - Sell these stockpiles on the international market;
  - Ship them out for conversion to fuel rods for medical and research purposes; or
  - Dilute them to unenriched (0.7 percent) natural uranium (as some Obama Administration officials have suggested)?<sup>1</sup>
- Or would Iran be able to keep them in a form that could be reconverted relatively easily for further enrichment, as it does under the current interim agreement?
- This is a crucial outstanding issue, since stockpile size is a major determinant of breakout time.

## **WOULD IRAN BE ALLOWED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D) ACTIVITIES ON CENTRIFUGES?**

For 10 years, Iran will engage in “limited” R&D on next-generation centrifuges to ensure a breakout time of at least one year.

*Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- What would such limits entail?
  - Would Iran be permitted to feed other gases into advanced centrifuges?
  - Would Iran be permitted to connect advanced centrifuges in cascades?
  - At which facility or facilities will R&D on advanced centrifuges occur, and will all such work be subject to full International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) transparency?
- Centrifuge efficiency is another major determinant of breakout time, so the more Iran can improve the performance of new centrifuge models – possibly as much as twenty or more times as efficient as its current IR-1 – the shorter its potential breakout time, both during and after the 10-year sunset clause.

## **WOULD IRAN CLOSE ITS ILLEGAL FORDOW ENRICHMENT FACILITY?**

Fordow would become an R&D facility with 1,000 IR-1 centrifuges, but no uranium enrichment for 15 years; Iran could not build additional enrichment facilities for 15 years.

*Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- If Fordow is not to be used for enrichment, will the cascade tubing for the remaining 1,000 centrifuges be disconnected or destroyed?
- Will Iran be permitted to use other gases for centrifuge R&D that could improve IR-1 efficiency, and could it replace “broken” IR-1 machines with these more efficient versions (as is allowed under the current interim deal)?

## **WHAT OTHER RESTRICTIONS WOULD BE PLACED ON IRAN’S ENRICHMENT CAPACITY?**

For 10 years, enrichment would be limited to ensure breakout time of at least one year, and Iran’s “centrifuge manufacturing base will be frozen.”

*Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- Specifically, how does limiting Iran to 5,060 operating IR-1 centrifuges (and 6,104 total installed) producing 3.67 percent LEU at Natanz roll back its breakout time to at least one year from the current estimated 2-3 months?
- How would the approximately 13-14,000 remaining IR-1 and IR-2m centrifuges be uninstalled, and would IAEA monitored storage be physically remote from Iran’s existing nuclear facilities?<sup>2</sup> Iran’s latent enrichment capability would be less restricted if it would not be required to dismantle this infrastructure, including cascade tubing.

- Would the freeze on Iran's centrifuge manufacturing base limit the number and types of centrifuges it could produce and store, and if so, at what levels? Would this freeze last as long as the continuous surveillance period for its manufacturing activities (20 years)? As with the fate of its current non-operating installed centrifuges, this could affect Iran's breakout time, both after the sunset and if it chose to cheat.

## *Pathway to a Bomb: Plutonium*

### **WOULD IRAN SHUT DOWN PERMANENTLY ITS HEAVY WATER REACTOR AT ARAK AND END ALL FUEL PRODUCTION?**

The existing reactor core would be destroyed or removed from Iran, and replaced according to a design "agreed to by Iran and the P5+1." Iran would "indefinitely" ship out all spent fuel and commit to no reprocessing or reprocessing R&D on spent fuel, but it could build new heavy water reactors after 15 years.

#### *Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- What reactor design would be agreed by Iran and the P5+1?
  - If it remains a heavy water reactor with only the core redesigned, Iran could retain the capacity to produce enough plutonium for approximately one nuclear weapon annually.
  - If the entire reactor is converted to use light water – the type Iran says it needs to produce medical isotopes – its capacity to produce fissile material could be decreased, but not eliminated.
- Who would supply reactor fuel (whether natural or low-enriched uranium)?
- Could "indefinitely" mean "permanently?" If so, Iran likely would not be able to stockpile spent fuel, even after the moratorium on building heavy water reactors; otherwise, it could accumulate enough spent fuel to reprocess into plutonium for a nuclear weapon(s).
  - Could Iran conduct reprocessing R&D so long as it wouldn't involve spent fuel? If so, where would such work occur and under what level of IAEA scrutiny?

## *PMD and Ballistic Missiles*

### **WOULD A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT BE PREDICATED ON IRAN RESOLVING ALL CURRENT PMD ISSUES TO THE IAEA'S SATISFACTION, AND ON HALTING WORK ON DELIVERY VEHICLES?**

Iran would implement an agreed set of measures to address PMD concerns.

#### *Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- Would this agreed set of measures include all PMD issues contained in the current Iran-IAEA Framework for Cooperation, or is a different or lesser standard being created?

- Would this agreed set of measures require all PMD issues to be resolved before a comprehensive agreement is reached? If not, this would limit inspectors' ability to gain a comprehensive picture of Iran's progress toward nuclear weapons capability.
- Iran's existing arsenal of delivery vehicles, primarily nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles, apparently would not be rolled back by a comprehensive agreement.

## *Verification*

### **WOULD INSPECTORS BE ABLE TO DETECT ANY POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS PROMPTLY AND INDISPUTABLY?**

Iran would implement the IAEA Additional Protocol, as well as the Modified Code 3.1 (supplement to its original IAEA Safeguards Agreement).

#### *Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- Would Iran be required to provide the IAEA with a comprehensive, complete and accurate declaration of its entire nuclear program as a necessary first step in the implementation of a comprehensive agreement?
- The Additional Protocol and Modified Code 3.1 would strengthen the inspections regime, but would they provide enough time to detect and respond to any breakout or sneakout attempt? This question is inseparable from that of breakout time.
  - Would the comprehensive agreement allow for IAEA snap inspections, including suspected undeclared nuclear-related facilities?
  - Would inspectors have unrestricted access to suspected military sites related to Iran's nuclear program, including IRGC and IRGC-Quds Force installations? This is interrelated with progress on PMD.
- Would Iran ratify and adhere to the new inspections regime, or merely implement it? If the latter, Iran could suspend its compliance (as it has done previously with both the Additional Protocol and Modified Code 3.1).
  - Senior Administration officials have said Iran would undertake the Additional Protocol "provisionally."<sup>3</sup>
- Would the IAEA have access to interview all Iranian personnel with knowledge or involvement in the development of Iran's nuclear program?
- Presuming Iran's nuclear infrastructure expands after the 10- and 15-year sunsets, would the IAEA be able to devote increased resources to monitor a larger program?

## *Enforcement*

### **WHAT WOULD BE THE EXTENT AND TIMING OF SANCTIONS RELIEF?**

U.S., E.U. and U.N. Security Council (UNSC) sanctions would be lifted in exchange for Iranian compliance with the provisions of a comprehensive agreement.

*Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- Would UNSC sanctions relief be predicated on resolution of PMD issues, and if so, would this be a prerequisite for suspending U.S. and E.U. sanctions?
  - Would U.S. and E.U. sanctions relief occur at the outset of a comprehensive agreement (as claimed by Iran) or be contingent on Iranian compliance over a given period? If the latter, what would be the timeframe(s), and would they be linked to the sunset clauses on enrichment?
- Would sanctions relief include the releases of tranches of Iranian assets currently frozen in overseas escrow accounts? If so, how much and under what conditions?
  - Under the interim agreement, Iran has received roughly \$10 billion from these accounts, with an estimated \$100-120 billion still frozen.
- What mechanism(s) or process(es) would allow the IAEA to verify Iran's compliance, and how would disputes about Iranian compliance be resolved?
  - What specifically is meant by the "key nuclear-related steps" Iran would have to take before U.S. and E.U. sanctions could be suspended?
- What measures would be included to ensure sanctions could be re-imposed or snapped back into place, were Iran to violate the agreement?
- Would a superseding UNSC resolution that implements the deal and suspends sanctions also spell out consequences for Iranian non-compliance, including but not limited to sanctions?
- How would UNSC sanctions automatically snap back, when each of its permanent members can exercise a veto?
- What could guarantee the IAEA's and UNSC's ability to enforce an agreement, including snap-back sanctions, given contrasting attitudes among veto-wielding UNSC members toward rebuilding economic and strategic ties with Iran?
- What limits on Iran's nuclear program would be contained in a superseding UNSC resolution?
- Would UNSC sanctions remain in place after the sunset of an agreement?

## *Sunset*

### **WHAT JUSTIFIES THE EXPIRATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT, ABSENT PROOF IRAN HAS ABANDONED ITS ILLEGAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM AND ITS ROLE AS A DRIVING FORCE FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND INSTABILITY?**

Beyond the 10-year sunset on enrichment, Iran would abide by a plan "resulting in certain limitations on enrichment capacity," and U.S. sanctions on Iran for terrorism, human rights abuses and ballistic missiles would remain in place under a comprehensive agreement.

*Remaining Questions/Concerns:*

- Does such a plan already exist, and if so, has Iran shared it with the P5+1?
- How is this plan determined, and what credible mechanisms would it contain to ensure Iran adheres to its Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations and is unable to develop nuclear weapons capability?

- Would it place limits on R&D and operation of advanced centrifuges, including the production of highly enriched uranium (HEU) for fissile material?
- As President Obama noted, “in Year 13, 14, 15, [Iran could] have advanced centrifuges that enrich uranium fairly rapidly, and at that point, the breakout times would have shrunk almost down to zero.”<sup>4</sup> Is this scenario consistent with the plan?
- Would the Modified Code 3.1, which requires Iran to provide the IAEA with design information for new facilities, remain in place after the 15-year sunset for new uranium enrichment facilities and heavy water reactors? Would Iran’s adherence to the Additional Protocol and other inspections be permanent?
- The sunset provisions for U.S. sanctions on Iran for terrorism, human rights abuses and ballistic missiles require the President certify to Congress that Iran is no longer pursuing or supporting these activities, and that Iran is no longer pursuing a nuclear weapons program. The sunset of a comprehensive agreement would not necessarily solve this.

# Endnotes

- 1. Michael Crowley, "Ernest Moniz: Iran deal closes enrichment loophole," Politico, April 7, 2015.
- 2. Iran's roughly 1,000 advanced-generation IR-2m centrifuges would be removed from Natanz to IAEA-monitored storage.
- 3. White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Background Press Call on the Iran Framework Negotiations," April 2, 2015.
- 4. Josh Lederman, "Obama says Iran could cut nuke time to near zero in 13 years," Associated Press, April 7, 2015.



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