



Written by on June 10, 2010

Obama, Clinton Respond to UN Sanctions Against Iran

Speaking in the White House Diplomatic Reception Room on June 9, President Obama made a statement commenting on the UN Security Council's vote earlier in the day to impose a fourth round of sanctions against Iran in response to that nation's controversial nuclear-fuel enrichment program.

"This resolution will put in place the toughest sanctions ever faced by the Iranian government," said the President, "and it sends an unmistakable message about the international community's commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons."



Obama continued, employing the term "international" or "international community" several times:

For years, the Iranian government has failed to live up to its obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has violated its commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency. It has ignored U.N. Security Council resolutions. And while Iran's leaders hide behind outlandish rhetoric, their actions have been deeply troubling. Indeed, when I took office just over 16 months ago, Iranian intransigence was well-established. Iran had gone from zero centrifuges spinning to several thousand, and the international community was divided about how to move forward.

Yet this day was not inevitable. We made clear from the beginning of my administration that the United States was prepared to pursue diplomatic solutions to address the concerns over Iranian nuclear programs. I extended the offer of engagement on the basis of mutual interest and mutual respect. And together with the United Kingdom, with Russia, China, and Germany, we sat down with our Iranian counterparts. We offered the opportunity of a better relationship between Iran and the international community — one that reduced Iran's political isolation, and increased its economic integration with the rest of the world. In short, we offered the Iranian government the prospect of a better future for its people, if — and only if — it lives up to its international obligations.

Obama also charged that "Iran further violated its own obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions to suspend uranium enrichment. Instead, they're enriching up to 20 percent. It has failed to comply fully with IAEA's requirements. Indeed, Iran is the only NPT signatory in the world — the only one — that cannot convince the IAEA that its nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes."

While Obama was correct in stating that Iran has reportedly begun the process of enriching uranium fuel to a 20-percent level of U-235 — required for a reactor in Tehran that is used to make medical isotopes — weapons-grade uranium must be enriched to about 90 percent U-235.

Obama closed his remarks by saying: "Today's sanctions are yet another signal that if the Iranian government continues to undermine the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] and the peace that it protects, then Iran will find itself more isolated, less prosperous and less secure."



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These remarks mirrored similar statements that Obama made during his his first speech to the United Nations General Assembly last September 23, during which he harkened back to the fear of nuclear annihilation that was strong in the aftermath of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki — fear that served as a strong initial impetus for founding the UN. Obama prefaced those remarks by saying: "This institution was founded at the dawn of the atomic age, in part because man's capacity to kill had to be contained." In that speech, he urged that UN members support "efforts to strengthen the NPT," warning that "Those nations that refuse to live up to their obligations must face consequences."

In making such a pitch for UN control of nuclear weapons (and even nuclear materials insufficiently enriched to build weapons) Obama was following in the footsteps of one of his Democrat predecessors in the White House, John F. Kennedy, who on September 25, 1961, presented to the 16th General Assembly of the United Nations a disarmament proposal entitled, *Freedom from War: The United States Program for General and Complete Disarmament in a Peaceful World* (State Department Publication 7277). One of the planks of that documents called for "progressive controlled disarmament and continuously developing principles and procedures of international law would proceed to a point where no state would have the military power to challenge the progressively strengthened U.N. Peace Force and all international disputes would be settled according to the agreed principles of international conduct."

The language employed in that document and Obama's recent statements are both replete with references to "international" law, conduct, community, and obligations, as if national sovereignty were of no consequence.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also made comments about the passage of the UN sanctions on June 9 to reporters gathered in Bogota, Colombia. "I do know from reports coming from a number of other countries that have had first-hand negotiations over the nuclear program that there is a diversity of opinion within the leadership — not over their right to enrich to use for peaceful nuclear purposes that is absolutely agreed to by everyone in the leadership, but whether or not there should be a move toward a breakout capacity of toward weapons," said Clinton. "There is a lot of debate within the [Iranian] leadership."

According to an AP report, Clinton said she is naming senior State Department diplomat Robert Einhorn to lead a U.S. government-wide effort to speed implementation of the new UN nuclear sanctions against Iran. Einhorn is a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations, as are U.S. Ambassador to the UN Susan E. Rice, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Clinton's husband, former President Bill Clinton, and a number of other top U.S. policymakers.

Voice of America News on June 9 also noted the reaction to the sanctions among several members of Congress including Republicans:

In the U.S. Congress, key Democrats described the U.N. vote as a diplomatic victory for President Obama that will pave the way for further action. Republicans described the resolution as weak and unenforceable.??The chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Democrat Howard Berman, said it paves the way for tougher actions by the European Union and others, adding that Congress intends to pass its sanctions legislation later this month. ??The ranking Republican on the committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, called the resolution weak and full of loopholes, asserting it has no effective means of enforcement and will not stop Iran's march towards nuclear weapons or influence the regime's behavior in any way.



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As we noted in our previous report, "[UN Votes for Sanctions Against Iran](#)," Berman was the sponsor of H.R.2194, the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2009, which was passed by the House last December 15 by a vote of 412-12, and is currently in a conference committee owing to differences with the Senate's amended version.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen's complaint that the UN resolution is too "weak" and has no effective means of enforcement is hardly a statement to be expected from the administration's "opposition" party, and contrasts sharply with remarks made by Rep. Ron Paul (R-Texas), who in his *Texas Straight Talk* column entitled, "Iran Sanctions Are Precursor to War" responded strongly to the passage of Berman's bill: "This policy is pure isolationism. It is designed to foment war by cutting off trade and diplomacy."

Photo: President Barack Obama makes a statement about Iran on June 9, 2010, in the Diplomatic Reception Room of the White House in Washington.: AP Images



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