



Written by on September 25, 2009

Obama Condemns Iran Over Secret Nuclear Plant

Appearing at a press conference at the Pittsburgh Convention Center with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and French President Nicolas Sarkozy at the Group of 20 economic summit on September 25, President Barack Obama accused Iran of building a secret nuclear fuel plant and of “threatening the security and the stability of the region and the world.”

Obama started his address by informing reporters that on the previous day the United States, the United Kingdom, and France had presented “detailed evidence” to the the UN’s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, “demonstrating that the Islamic Republic of Iran has been building a covert uranium enrichment facility near Qom for several years.”



The IAEA said Iran had disclosed the existence of the plant to IAEA Director-General Mohamed El Baradei on September 21. Reuters news reported that a senior Iranian official speaking at the United Nations said accusations that the plant was clandestine were "not true." "If it was a covert plant, we would not have informed the [International Atomic Energy] Agency," the official said.

Reuters also quoted IAEA spokesman Marc Vidricaire, who said Iran had stated its intention to enrich uranium at the new plant only to the five-percent level suitable for power plant fuel. This would be equivalent to its Natanz complex, which was hidden from the IAEA until 2002. “The agency also understands from Iran that no nuclear material has been introduced into the facility,” said Vidricaire.

Obama noted that the allegedly secret facility was discovered earlier in the week, after the Iranian government presented a letter to the IAEA that made reference to it. The secrecy on Iran’s part apparently referred to Iran’s delay in reporting its existence for several years after its construction began. “The existence of this facility underscores Iran’s continuing unwillingness to meet its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions and IAEA requirements,” said Obama.

Obama also charged that “Iran’s decision to build yet another nuclear facility without notifying the IAEA represents a direct challenge to the basic compact at the center of the non-proliferation regime. These rules are clear: All nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy; those nations with nuclear weapons must move towards disarmament; those nations without nuclear weapons must forsake them.”

Obama accused Iran of “breaking rules that all nations must follow” and called for international inspectors “to immediately investigate this disturbing information.” The president did not specify if the United States was among the nations subject to IAEA rules and what the U.S. reaction would be if the IAEA or others nations attempted to impose sanctions against America for alleged infractions.



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Speaking at the Pittsburgh event, French President Sarkozy said: "Following the enriching plant of Natanz in 2002, it is now the Qom one which is revealed. It was designed and built over the past several years in direct violation of resolutions from the Security Council and from the IAEA. I am expecting from the IAEA an exhaustive, strict, and rigorous investigation, as President Obama just said."

British Prime Minister Brown reinforced Obama's and Sarkozy's statements, stating: "America, the United Kingdom, and France are at one. Iran's nuclear program is the most urgent proliferation challenge that the world faces today."

Continuing, Brown presented Iran with an ultimatum: "Confronted by the serial deception of many years, the international community has no choice today but to draw a line in the sand. On October the 1st, Iran must now engage with the international community and join the international community as a partner. If it does not do so, it will be further isolated."

A British *Times* report of September 25 made the observation: "The five permanent United Nations Security Council members and Germany will be pressing Iran to scale back on its enrichment activities. But Tehran has declared that it will not bargain on enrichment."

Near the end of his statement, President Obama said:

To put it simply: Iran must comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions and make clear it is willing to meet its responsibilities as a member of the community of nations. We have offered Iran a clear path toward greater international integration if it lives up to its obligations, and that offer stands. But the Iranian government must now demonstrate through deeds its peaceful intentions or be held accountable to international standards and international law.

It would be interesting to consider, for a moment, how Obama's statement will be perceived, not only in Iran, but throughout the Middle East. From an online guide entitled, "[Doing Business in the Middle East: Middle Eastern Social and Business Culture](#)," we learn: "Respecting an individual's honor and saving face are key drivers in the indirect communication style that is prevalent throughout the Middle East.... People in the Middle East place great emphasis on respect and dignity. Younger colleagues, in particular, must address their business counterparts with the appropriate title and act in a respectful manner at all times."

Keeping these cultural characteristics in mind, it is not hard to imagine the reaction among Iranian and other political leaders in the region to what they surely must regard as arrogant and dictatorial statements from an upstart U.S. president. Such as:

- "Iran's continuing unwillingness to meet its obligations..."
- "Iran's decision to build yet another nuclear facility without notifying the IAEA..."
- "It is time for Iran to act immediately to restore the confidence of the international community by fulfilling its international obligations."
- "Iran must be prepared to cooperate fully and comprehensively with the IAEA..."

Consider, for a moment, an international conference hosted by Middle Eastern political leaders, in which Iran's President Ahmadinejad spoke of "America's continuing unwillingness to meet its obligations" or stated: "It is time for the United States to act immediately to restore the confidence of the international community by fulfilling its international obligations."

What would our reaction be? Something to the effect: "Who died and left you ruler of the world, Ali Baba? If you don't like the way we conduct our affairs, you can lump it!"



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This ability to consider the Middle East from the Middle East's point of view — and not exclusively our own — was demonstrated by Texas Representative Ron Paul in his November 15, 2000 speech, "Our Foolish War in the Middle East." Among the points made by Dr. Paul for our consideration:

- For over 1,000 years the West has dominated the Middle East. During these thousand years resentment has continued, but for obvious reasons it is now being directed toward America. No one should be surprised when our ships become vulnerable and are actually blown up in the Middle East.
- To put this in a proper perspective, consider how Americans, or especially Texans, would feel if the Gulf of Mexico were patrolled and protected by warships of a foreign power, say the Russians. What would we then think if that same power patrolling the Gulf built air bases in Texas and Florida with our government's complicity with the argument that this was necessary to protect "their" oil and with our government's complicity? This would anger many Americans and this anger would be directed to both the foreign occupiers of our territorial waters and our own government that permitted it. Yet this is exactly what has been happening in the Persian Gulf region. For religious, historic and sovereignty reasons, the Muslim people harbor great resentment toward us.
- The greatest threat to our national security is our own bad policy. Our policy has continued to permit our own military technology, developed by our taxpayers, to get into the hands of our so-called allies as well as our potential enemies like China.
- Our many failures in the last 50 years should prompt us to reassess our entire foreign policy of interventionism. The notion that since we are the only superpower left we have an obligation to tell everybody else how to live should come an end.

There is one other downside to President Obama's incessant harping about "Iran's continuing unwillingness to meet its obligations under U.N. Security Council resolutions and IAEA requirements," that goes beyond the loss of good will mentioned by Rep. Paul, however. And that is the precedent set for our own sovereignty.

If we declare that Iran's sovereign freedom to administer its own affairs is subject to UN oversight, then if the day comes when a UN agency starts dictating how the United States should handle its internal affairs, what recourse do we have? If that day comes, we will have three choices:

- 1.) Submit to UN authority.
- 2.) Continue to claim UN authority against nations small enough for us to dominate but claim exemption for ourselves, in which case the world will view us as hypocrites, inciting more ill will.
- 3.) Do what we should have done in the first place — terminate our membership in the UN, and then adopt a foreign policy of minding our own business.

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