

Israel is fast approaching the moment of truth with Iran

(December 27, 2021 / JNS) The nuclear talks between world powers and Iran are moving forward, and will soon reach the decision-making stage. To borrow a soccer analogy, the sides are done feeling each other out.

The Iranians, masters of negotiation, tried conditioning the continuation of talks on the removal of sanctions and were rebuffed. It appears that this time the Europeans (mainly Germany, France and Great Britain) are more involved in the talks, while the Americans, who spearheaded negotiations under former President Barack Obama, are working more collaboratively with the other global powers.

It seems that despite the mutual threats and prevailing sense that the talks were headed toward failure, an agreement will ultimately be reached that will restrict Iran's pace of uranium enrichment and give Tehran what it wants with the removal of most of the draconian sanctions.

Iran's long-term strategic interest is to possess a nuclear weapon. In the short term, however, under the yoke of sanctions and a sputtering economy that threatens the regime's survival, Tehran must get the sanctions lifted. The United States, under a president with plummeting approval ratings, needs an achievement to improve his standing. The Chinese and Russians, which regardless don't abide by the sanctions, will be glad to return to doing legitimate business with Iran—such that ultimately, all sides have an interest in reaching a deal.

Israel is in the toughest position of all. If a deal is reached, currently sanctioned funds will be unfrozen, allowing Iranian terror and influence to run amok across the Middle East. We can expect the situation in Syria to change as well, and for the Iranians to apply even more pressure in an effort to cement their influence there. The Iranian nuclear threat won't be eliminated, either, with the country remaining close to the threshold point. The Iranians will be able to secretly move ahead with their nuclear program, which will bring them closer to nuclear breakout capability.

Israel has the ability to attack Iran, and will soon have no other choice because

the proverbial sword is almost at its neck. It appears that the critical moment is fast approaching. We cannot rely on American military intervention, which most likely will not come. When Israel has faced significant strategic threats in the past and taken the initiative, the Israel Defense Forces has emerged victorious.

The preparations currently underway are meant to improve the IDF's attack capabilities and finalize a better plan of action. The IDF must receive a clear directive from the Israeli government, which defines the objective: devastating damage to Iran's nuclear program; and the target date: fall of 2022. Despite the difficulties, it seems the time has come for the IDF to prepare a strike plan in conjunction with the country's intelligence services.

At the same time, Israel must prepare for an Iranian response from its soil, and via Hezbollah as well. There is no reason for panic—talk of war with Iran is overblown. Israel has been fighting Iran for over two decades, and the IDF has the ability to continue coping with the Iranian threat and hitting Hezbollah hard. Beyond the operational preparations, Israel needs to prepare a diplomatic plan to legitimize a military strike and soften the international reaction.

Vice Adm. (ret.) Eliezer Marom served as commander of the Israeli Navy from 2007-2011.

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