

(Video) As Vienna Talks Enter Eighth Session, Iran Regime Demands Show Signs of Escalation

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PARIS, FRANCE, December 30, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In an article on its website, the Foreign Affairs Committee of [the National Council of Resistance of Iran \(NCRI\)](#), wrote that as negotiations to restore the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) entered their eighth session on Monday, skepticism about their prospects continued to grow.



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The seventh session began on November 29 following a gap of more than five months and continued through the first week of December with little, if any, progress. In fact, officials from the United States, Britain, France, and Germany all indicated that Iran's posture in those talks had actually undermined earlier progress by backtracking on points that had supposedly been agreed to over the course of six sessions between April and June.

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NCRI

As well as brazenly demanding that those earlier agreements should be, the Iranian regime's negotiators also hardened Tehran's core position. Even under its previous, so-called moderate president, Tehran insisted that US sanctions should be lifted in their entirety before any restrictions were re-imposed on the Iranian nuclear program.

Now, under the administration of Ebrahim Raisi, the regime is specifically insisting that the up-front sanctions relief should extend beyond the scope of the JCPOA and include sanctions related to issues other than nuclear proliferation, such as Tehran's human rights abuses and support for terrorism.

The Iranian regime's Foreign Ministry's comments at the start of the eighth session arguably signaled yet another escalation of Tehran's demands, insisting that the current discussions focus entirely upon methods by which relief from US sanctions can be verified in advance of the regime's return to compliance with the JCPOA.

Iranian negotiators further indicated that they consider the latter issue to be on a separate track, to be addressed after sanctions relief is confirmed. Western negotiators continued to dismiss it as a non-starter even as they pressed forward with the diplomatic process.

The European Union's point man in the Vienna talks Enrique Mora told reporters that they would be pursuing "both tracks in parallel" and that resolution of the sanctions issue and the nuclear compliance issue would be "mutually reinforcing." Other Western officials continued to show support for this approach but also expressed doubt as to whether Tehran would adopt a posture of sufficient openness to compromise.

Toward that end, the US and the E3 signaled that the current round of negotiations would be among the last unless recognizable progress was achieved.

While some Western officials floated late January as a "deadline" for some form of agreement, others expressed willingness to push the talks to early February. This vagueness naturally



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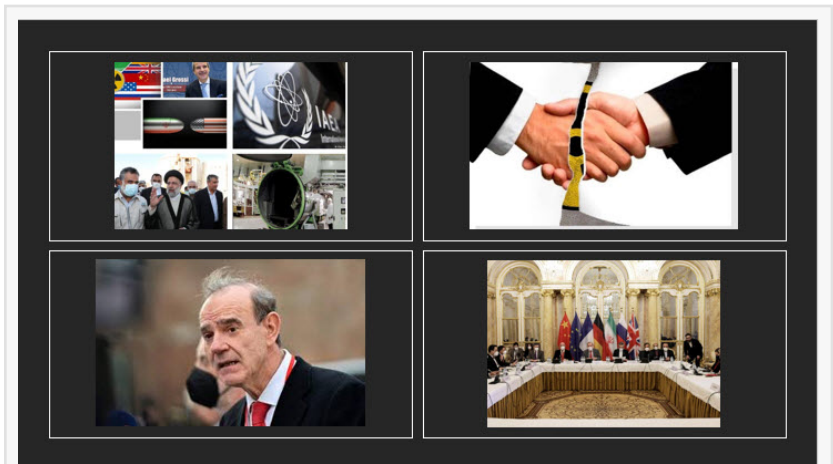
elicited warnings from critics of recent Western policy toward Iran, with some noting that the five-month delay in negotiations following Raisi's "election" reflected too much tolerance of the efforts of the regime in Tehran at "playing for time."

That is something that US officials explicitly said Iran would not be permitted to do. Nevertheless, in October the lead American envoy in the nuclear talks, Rob Malley, left open the possibility that Iran could take either "weeks" or "months" to return to those talks. On December 17, Mora gave a timeframe of "weeks" for the conclusion of the nuclear talks, but this statement was similarly vague and did little to downplay critics' concerns about the EU having previously allowed Iran to drag out the negotiating process indefinitely.

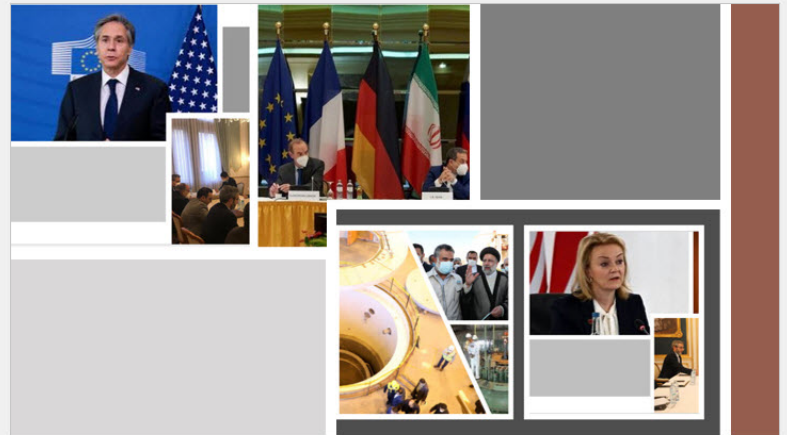
When the Iranian regime ceased all compliance with the JCPOA in early 2020, the E3 announced they were triggering a dispute resolution process written into the agreement. This should have resulted in all UN sanctions back into place after approximately three months without a resolution, but the EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, quickly made it clear that the multinational body was willing to extend that timeframe for as long as was needed.

The Iranian negotiators adopted a similar language at the start of the eighth session in Vienna. Its nuclear-negotiating team told reporters that they were willing to stay as long as it takes to secure their demands.

The regime's critics are certain to regard this as a tacit admission that the team intends to prolong the talks while Iran continues advancing its nuclear program. As if to get ahead of such warnings, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran issued a statement promising not to push its



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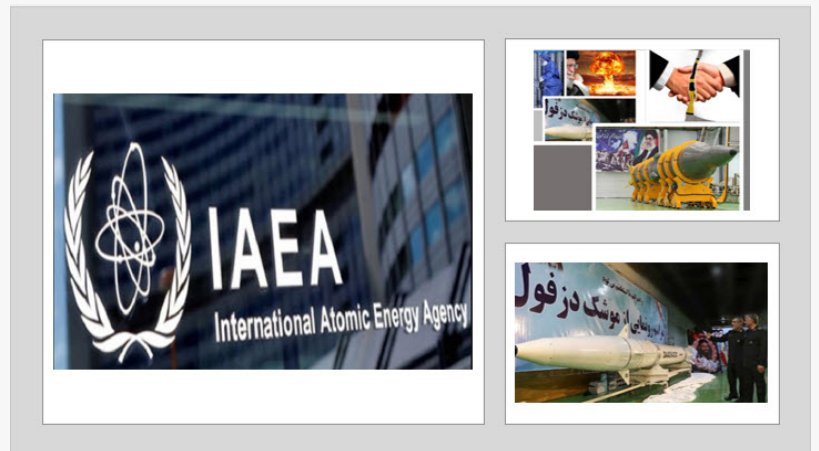
The new ceiling places some of Iran's enriched uranium only a small technical step away from weapons-grade, and this situation is made all the more threatening by the fact that the regime in Tehran has also been installing new cascades of advanced enrichment centrifuges, in contravention of the JCPOA. As long as this equipment remains online or easily accessible, the regime will be capable of further enriching its uranium even more quickly than before, thereby narrowing the window for its "breakout" to status as a nuclear-armed state.

In fact, Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Organization, said in May that Iran's accumulation of new material and relevant knowledge made it unlikely that its nuclear program could be sufficiently constrained by the simple restoration of the JCPOA. Grossi suggested a parallel agreement or enhancement to the existing agreement as a means of compensating for the effects of the regime's provocative violations, but Tehran has repeatedly rejected any such alteration in the preexisting terms.

The Iranian regime's Foreign Ministry reiterated this point at the opening of the eighth session in Vienna, stating that it would be "intolerable" for Western powers to demand anything in those talks that were not already established by the JCPOA. However, the officials in Tehran do not appear to be holding themselves to this same standard, as evidenced by recent statements indicating that non-nuclear sanctions should be lifted in order to entice Iran back into



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compliance.

On Monday, the regime appeared to go even further, with Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian saying that Iran must not only be freed from sanctions but must find itself in a situation where international oil sales can be conducted “easily and without any restrictions.” Tehran even went so far as to say that it expects to complete such sales up to a specific volume before being once again subjected to the restrictions imposed by the JCPOA.

These comments represent an escalation in at least two respects. First, they make the Iranian regime’s nuclear compliance conditional not just upon its freedom to trade with foreign powers but also upon the actual volume of trade that those foreign powers are both willing and able to engage in with Iran.

Second, they make explicit Tehran’s intention to reap the benefits of sanctions relief under the JCPOA while also continuing to advance its nuclear program in defiance of that agreement, for an indeterminate amount of time after relief is re-established.

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