

Iran Rules Out Uranium Enrichment Proposal

The International proposals are arrogant though Iran's President's position makes it difficult to be otherwise.

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The head of Iran's nuclear agency ruled out a compromise proposal to enrich uranium for his country's nuclear program in Russia, insisting Saturday that the process must be done domestically.

Asked if Tehran would agree to enriching uranium abroad, Gholamreza Aghazadeh told reporters, "Iran's nuclear fuel will be produced inside Iran." He spoke after talks with Russian envoy Igor Ivanov.

His comments came a day after reports emerged that the United States and European negotiators were willing to accept the arrangement to allow Iran to move ahead with its nuclear program while ensuring it does not produce atomic bombs.

Aghazadeh, who also is vice president, said Iran was open to other proposals, pointing to an earlier Iranian idea that other countries participate in the enrichment process on Iranian soil as a guarantee the program is used only for peaceful purposes.

"What is important for us is that we be entrusted to carry out enrichment in Iran. As for participation by other countries in Iran's uranium enrichment program, we will consider it if there is any proposals," he said.

Washington says Iran is aiming to produce nuclear warheads. Tehran says its program is solely to produce electricity and insists it has the right to develop the entire nuclear fuel cycle on its own.

Iranian state run television quoted Ivanov as saying his visit reflected Russia's desire to help ease tensions between Iran and Europe over the nuclear program.

He did not confirm the existence of the proposed compromise or whether he presented it to Iranian officials.

Earlier, Iran's top nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani, also refused to confirm reports that Ivanov presented the plan.

In Vienna, Austria, on Friday, a diplomat accredited to the International Atomic Energy Agency confirmed that a position paper entitled "Elements of a Long-Term Solution" had been passed on to the Russians about a week ago.

Uranium in its natural state does not have a sufficiently high concentration of fissile isotopes for it to be used in nuclear reactors or weapons, and the concentration must be raised through the enrichment process.

Carrying out the enrichment in Russia theoretically would deny Iran the capacity to make fuel for nuclear weapons.

On Nov. 24, the IAEA is scheduled to discuss whether to refer Iran to the U.N. Security Council for possible sanctions connected to its nuclear program. An agreement before

then could avert a vote and avoid straining relations between Russia and the United States, both of which have veto power in the Security Council.

The matter has troubled Moscow–Washington relations for years. Iran's nuclear program centers on the Russian–built Bushehr nuclear power plant, an \$800 million project that is a significant source of income for Russia as well as an emblem of its technological sophistication.

Russia in the past has floated various ideas for overcoming Western concerns, including enrichment in Russia, and it has assured the West that Iran will send back to Russia all the reactor's spent nuclear fuel rods, which could be processed into plutonium for use in weapons.