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US Pushes Iran To Red Line

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Iran and six world powers (Russia, the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany and China) began an expert-level meeting about Tehran's nuclear program on Thursday, September 19, part of efforts to reach an agreement by late July on how to resolve a decade-old dispute that has stirred fears of a Middle East war. *Seyed Abbas Araghchi*, the Iranian *Deputy Minister* for Foreign Affairs, said before the talks kicked off that those serious differences remained but Iran hoped to achieve positive results with the 5+1 group and especially talking with the United States, Russia and China. There are clear signs that Iran is not prepared to pay any price. **The respect for Iran's rights and achievements of Iranian scholars is a red line not to be crossed.**

On November 24, 2013, the Geneva interim agreement, officially titled the Joint Plan of Action, was a pact signed between Iran and the P5+1 countries in Geneva, Switzerland. It consists of a short-term freeze of portions of Iran's nuclear program in exchange for decreased economic sanctions on Iran, as the countries work towards a long-term agreement. It represents the first formal agreement between the United States and Iran in 34 years. The implementation of the agreement began on January 20, 2014. At first the senior level talks were scheduled to last till July 20, 2014, then the date was moved to the November of this year. The Geneva interim agreement is in force only one year after the date of signature, so a new agreement is supposed to see light before November 24. There is little time left, the situation is critical. The United States understands it. No matter that, the State Department implements special policy.

State Secretary John Kerry says he wants to reach an agreement of universal importance but, like before, he insists on concession on the part of Iran. He hopes Iran will demonstrate ingenious and well thought over approach to prove it is ready for cooperation. **The US stance envisions that compromises and lifting of sanctions should be linked to concessions on the part of Iran which have no relation to the nuclear program.**

Meeting Finland's Foreign Minister in Tehran Rouhani condemned this policy saying, *"Today also we are ready to continue the talks until reaching a final agreement and if the G5+1 intention in the talks is not to pile up pressure on Iran to prevent its scientific and technological progress, the way for agreement is open."* He noted that Iran will not accept any discriminatory approach which runs counter to international laws and wants to be provided with absolute rights alike other members of the International Atomic Energy Agency. While emphasizing that the Geneva talks resulted in conclusion of a short-term deal which was later extended, the President said, *"Our red line is our scientific development and research on nuclear fields and Iran will by no means negotiate its defense potential, including its missile program."*

Obviously, the Washington's demands are unacceptable. For instance, **the White House insists on reduction of Iran's missile potential.**

The Russian delegation is led by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov. He said in his interview to RIA-Novosti on September 16 that the US stance on Iran nuclear issue is counterproductive and negatively affects the prospects for reaching an agreement at the New York round of talks. According to him, there should be no restrictions on Iranian missile program. Russia has never supported such approach and it never will. That's where the parties stand before the talks kick off. *Foreign Policy* writes that the Western policy on Iran is wrong. If the policy is not rectified it would be extremely hard to expect a positive result at the Iran-Sextet meeting. The gist of the problem is whether the US and other NATO states really want to close the Iranian dossier soon. With demands unanswered they have a pretext to continue imposing sanctions and maintain leverage over Iran. But Iran is adamant not to cede to pressure.

For instance, Iran has refused to cooperate with the United States on the Islamic State. On September 15, Iran spurned an American request for cooperation in the fight against Islamic State militants, but the United States said the door remains open to a rare opportunity to make common cause with its principal adversary in the Middle East. Iran's rebuff came as world powers meeting in the French capital agreed to use "any means necessary" to combat the militant force surging in Iraq and Syria. Iran believes the Americans are forming the coalition against the Islamic State to justify their presence in the Middle East. This point of view is expressed by Iranian supreme leader ayatollah Ali Khomeini. He tweeted his disdain for the international effort and revealed a back-channel U.S. offer of unspecified cooperation against the militants. Khamenei said Iran rejected the U.S. request because of Washington's "evil intentions," the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported. The Reuters news agency quoted Khamenei as telling Iran's state television that the U.S. request was "hollow and self-serving," echoing Iran's claims that Western nations are seeking to expand their influence in the region as part of the campaign against the Islamic State. *"I rejected US offer to Iran about the IS because US has corrupted its hands in this issue. Mr. Zarif rejected US Secretary of State's offer too."* he said.

This was the first time the US attempts to make a deal with Iran on the Islamic State issue became public. **The fact that Iran made public its refusal to seek compromises with the United States to the detriment of its national interests is a clear signal that Tehran has drawn a red line in its contacts with Washington.**

Americans are trying to make a deal with Iran behind the Moscow's back. The idea is to substitute Russian oil flowing to the world market with the Iranian supplies in exchange for lifting the sanctions. Western media outlets spread rumors about the Iran's intention to take advantage of the Ukraine's crisis and start oil exports to Europe. The stories are made go round that Tehran agrees to let NATO forces cross its territory. They make it heard on the grapevine that Iran is ready to suspend its support of the Syrian government in exchange for ending the sanctions regime. All these rumors have nothing to do with reality. It's nothing more than just shooting the wind. The real relationship within the Iran-USA-Russia framework is quite different. Iranians are sober-minded people, they take all the offers coming from Washington with a grain of salt. This is the right attitude. All the attempts by the United States to drive a wedge between Russia and Iran go down the drain being doomed from the very start. Iran believes the United States has not refused its long time desire to change the political system in Iran. So there is no ground to expect the talks to successfully end till the date assigned according to the Geneva agreement - November 24.

Moreover, just a few weeks before the next round of talks the United States took new measures to complicate the relations with Tehran. On August 29, the US imposed sanctions on more than 25 businesses, banks and individuals it suspected of working to expand Iran's nuclear program, support terrorism and help Iran evade existing sanctions. The measures bar Americans from engaging in transactions with any of the designated parties, freeze their assets and block their property under US jurisdiction. Washington said its actions were still consistent with its commitment to provide sanctions relief in exchange for steps to halt the program. In a statement, US Under-Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David Cohen said that Washington's action in imposing the new sanctions *"reflects our continuing determination to take action against anyone, anywhere, who violates our sanctions."* Senior administration officials said the latest round of sanctions included action against the Russia-based Asia Bank, which Washington says was involved in converting and delivering US dollar bank notes to the Iranian government. They also targeted firms that have helped Iran support President Bashar Assad's government in Syria. No doubt the move will negatively affect the outcome of talks.

The recently imposed US sanctions against Iran will hinder the talks over the country's nuclear program, the Iranian foreign ministry has warned. The comments came as Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said the country should "resist" the measures. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Marzieh Afkham said the new sanctions would jeopardize a nuclear deal between Iran and world powers, the official IRNA news agency reported on August 30. *"These actions have a negative and non-constructive impact on the trend of the talks. The Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any unilateral and self-serving interpretation of last year's Geneva deal,"* she said adding that *«Iran strongly believes that the sanctions are against commitments made by the United States under the Geneva deal."* Rouhani also attacked the sanctions, saying they were an "invasion of the Iranian nation". He said: *"We should resist the invasion and put the invaders in their place. We should not allow the continuation and repetition of the invasion."* The Iran's state

television also said the move violated an interim agreement reached with world powers under which western nations agreed to ease sanctions in exchange for Iran curbing its nuclear activities.

The United States pays little attention to what Tehran says. The officials stress that the action did not constitute an expansion of the sanctions regime, but rather the enforcement of existing sanctions. It looks like Iran, Russia and China should work out the new initiatives of their own in case the West breaches the Geneva accords. Geography, energy riches, human potential and military might make Iran a powerful and stable Middle East state, this fact is indisputable. The idea of Tehran's international isolation put forward by Washington is archaic and out of date since a long time ago. Keeping Iran aside at the time terrorists have occupied a third of Iraqi territory seriously threatens international peace efforts. The Middle East badly needs Iran to be powerful and independent remaining immune to the efforts of the United States to exert pressure on its decision making process.

Under the circumstances, the first thing Russia and China should do is to withdraw from the sanctions' regime that was supported some time ago by these two states at the United Nations Security Council. Lifting the ban on military cooperation with Tehran is a timely and justified decision.

The US unilateral sanctions have always been illegal. Now it has become an instrument of blackmail used against the United Nations that actually transferred the issue the "big six". The Organization actually keeps away from tackling the issue. The participation in the negotiation process of Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, is illegal – the Commissioner has no justification for being a party to the talks. When it comes to Iran, Western negotiators dance to the Washington's tune the very same way they do defining their policy on Ukraine.