

Rouhani: Any Deal Should Lift All Sanctions

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – President Hassan Rouhani said Wednesday that a comprehensive nuclear agreement between Tehran and six world powers should have the entire anti-Iran sanctions lifted.

“The side negotiating with us should know that conclusion of the talks and the result of a deal should be removal of the whole oppressive and illegal sanctions,” President Rouhani said in Qom. The president denounced sanctions as cruel to the Iranian nation that also go counter to human rights. Iran will not accept any “imposition, humiliation and continuation of sanctions”, he said. Rouhani also said development is the Iranian nation’s inalienable right.

U.S. Report of Secret Iran Research ‘Bogus’

TEHRAN (Tasnim) – Iran’s UN mission on Wednesday slammed as “baseless and bogus” a report by the Washington Post, citing a terrorist group, as claiming that Tehran was conducting secret nuclear research.

“It’s a pity that the newspaper has published false and repetitious claims raised by a terrorist group whose inhumane nature is clear to all, particularly to the American public opinion, and the falsehood of that group’s previous claims have been made public after a while,” it said.

**Viewpoint**

By: Kayhan Int'l Staff Writer

**For Regional Peace and Security**


**Obama Aide Calls Netanyahu Visit ‘Destructive’**



**Bomb Attacks Leave Scores Dead in, Around Iraqi Capital**



**Displaced Iraqi Families in Worrying Situation**



ISIL Kidnaps 100 Iraqi Sunni Tribesmen

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – **ISIL militants have abducted 100 Sunni Muslim tribesmen near the city of Tikrit, local tribal leaders said on Wednesday, apparently to neutralize suspected opponents before a widely expected army offensive.**

Iraqi soldiers and pro-government Shia militias have been massing for days in preparation for an attack on ISIL strongholds along the Tigris River to the north and south of Tikrit, hometown of executed former dictator Saddam Hussein.

Tikrit, about 150 km (95 miles) north of Baghdad, has been controlled by the ISIL terrorists since they swept through northern Iraq in June, scattering Iraq’s security forces.

Tribal leaders said ISIL had detained 42 Sunni tribesmen in the village of Rubaidha on Tuesday whom they suspected of being ready to take up arms against them.

“They broke into the houses and asked for mobiles,” said Hatam al-Obeidi, a Rubaidha resident who escaped to the town of Tuz Khurmatu on Wednesday.

“They were checking everything in the mobiles that might show that the owner is against them,” he said, adding that his own telephone had been returned to him after a gunman told him he was “clean”.

Last week, the Takfiri terrorists detained 56 men accused of belonging to a government-backed Sunni militia, said Abu Kareem al-Obeidi, who left Rubaidha for the neighboring Diyala province to avoid abduction.

The militants initially set up a headquarters in Rubaidha, about 20 km (12 miles) north of Tikrit, after their June offensive, but pulled out after army helicopters mistakenly bombed the house of the local sheikh beside their base.

The sheikh then asked the militants to leave, residents said.

Iraq’s military said around 2,000 Shia militia fighters, known as the Popular Mobilization, had arrived near Tikrit in preparation for a major operation against ISIL.

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Raed Jabouri, governor of Tikrit’s Salahuddin province, said that 5,000 fighters from the security forces and the Popular Mobilization - formed last year with Iranian support after the rout of the army - would join “the operation to liberate Tikrit”.

Witnesses said the militants had on Wednesday blocked three main entrances to the south, west and north of Tikrit with 4-metre (12-foot) concrete blast walls.

They also covered a bridge across the Tigris with about 1 meter (three feet) of sand in the hope of absorbing the impact of bombs.

The witnesses saw a stream of SUV vehicles, apparently containing detainees, heading north toward the northern, ISIL-controlled city of Mosul.

After months of airstrikes by the United States and its Western and Arab allies, the ISIL is still wreaking havoc in several parts of the “caliphate” it declared in swathes of Iraq and Syria. In Diyala, adjoining Iran, officials say they have all but driven ISIL out.

IRGC Launches Drill in Strait of Hormuz



IRGC forces attack a replica of U.S. aircraft carrier in the Strait of Hormuz.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) – **The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps launched large-scale naval and air defense drills near a strategic Persian Gulf waterway on Wednesday in which dozens of speedboats swarmed a replica of a U.S. aircraft carrier.**

The drill, named Great Prophet 9, was held near the Strait of Hormuz, through which one fifth of the world’s oil passes. Iran’s regular army carried out naval drills near the strait in December.

National TV showed footage of “high-precision missiles” fired from the coast, and a helicopter, striking the mock U.S. aircraft carrier. Fast attack craft were also involved in the military exercises, which aim to “demonstrate the power” of the navy in protecting Iranian interests in the Persian Gulf.

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The drills, which also included shooting down a drone and planting undersea mines, were the first to involve a replica of a U.S. carrier.

A ceremony marking the exercises was attended by commanders of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps as well as by Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani.

“American aircraft carriers are very big ammunition depots, housing a lot of missiles, rockets, torpedoes and everything else,” IRGC’s navy chief Adm. Ali Fadavi said, adding that a direct hit by a missile could set off a large secondary explosion. Last month Fadavi said his force is capable of sinking American aircraft carriers in the event of war.

The IRGC’s chief commander Gen. Muhammad Ali Jafari said the drills send a “message of (Iran’s) might” to “extraterritorial powers,” a reference to the United States.

“With attention to the situation in the region, we have noticeably expanded the defense budget of the armed forces to ensure the stable security of the region,” Larijani told a news conference before the exercises.

The IRGC test-fired what it said were new 223 mph underwater missiles during the drills, according to Press TV.

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Kerry’s Wait-and-See Advice on Iran

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) – **Secretary of State John Kerry has sought to rebut critics of a potential nuclear deal with Iran, making his case on Capitol Hill just a week before the occupying regime of Israel’s PM is scheduled to deliver his broadside against the emerging accord in an address to Congress.**

“Anybody running around right now, jumping in to say, ‘Well, we don’t like the deal,’ or this or that, doesn’t know what the deal is,” Kerry said. “There is no deal yet. And I caution people to wait and see what these negotiations produce.”

At another point, Kerry asserted that Netanyahu had been wrong about the Obama administration’s policy toward Iran in the past. The Zionist PM, Kerry said, had denounced a 2013 interim accord to freeze much of Iran’s nuclear program, only to acknowledge belatedly that it was in the occupying regime’s interest.

“I don’t know anybody who looks at the interim agreement and doesn’t say, ‘Wow, this has really worked’ — including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who would like to see it extended, having opposed it vehemently in the beginning, calling it the deal of the century for Iran,” Kerry said.

Netanyahu, however, reiterated his criticism of the nuclear agreement that the Obama administration is now trying to negotiate, charging that it would do too little to constrain Iran’s nuclear program.

The State Department has already made it clear that Kerry does not plan to meet with Netanyahu when the Zionist leader visits Washington. And on Tuesday, Kerry told lawmakers that he planned to be in Switzerland next week negotiating the very agreement with the Iranians that Netanyahu intends to denounce in his March 3 address to Congress.

President Obama has also said he will not meet with Netanyahu, and the Israeli prime minister, who was invited to Washington by the House speaker, John A. Boehner, has turned down Democratic senators’ request for a private meeting, Senator Richard J. Durbin, Democrat of Illinois, said Tuesday.

Officially, the purpose of Kerry’s testimony on Tuesday, which he delivered to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was to explain the State Department’s \$50 billion budget request. That sum, he said, includes \$3.1 billion in support of the occupying regime of Israel; \$1.5 billion in assistance for the new Afghan government; \$639 million to help Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova stand up to Moscow; and \$355 million to support “governance and security reforms” in Iraq.

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Russia Offers Iran Alternative to S-300

MOSCOW (RT) -- **Russia’s state-owned high-tech corporation Rostec has offered Iran the chance to buy its latest Antey-2500 anti-aircraft and ballistic missile system, instead of the older S-300 system, the company’s CEO said, adding that Tehran is considering the deal.**

“We have offered Antey-2500 instead of S-300. They are thinking. No decision has been made yet,” Rostec CEO Sergei Chemezov said while speaking at an international arms show in Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, according to TASS.

Chemezov reminded that Antey-2500 is an improved version of the S-300, which Russia has stopped manufacturing. Under the \$800 million contract signed in 2007 by the two countries, Russia was to deliver S-300 air defense missile systems to Iran. However, the deal was canceled in 2010 by then-Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, following UN sanctions imposed on Iran due to its disputed nuclear program. In turn, Tehran filed a currently pending \$4 billion lawsuit against Russia with Geneva’s arbitration court.

During Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu’s visit to Iran in January, Moscow and Tehran signed a military cooperation deal that implies wider collaboration in personnel training and counter-terrorism activities.

Russia has maintained close ties with the Islamic Republic for years, particularly in the field of nuclear power. The first unit of the nuclear power plant in Bushehr was handed over to Iran by Russia in September 2013. Last autumn, a deal to build more reactors in Iran was signed.

In response to Russia’s offer, U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that Washington has objections to the deal if it is agreed upon.

Speaking at the international arms show, Rostec CEO Sergei Chemezov said that Russian foreign arms sales are growing, and reached \$13 billion last year. “I don’t conceal it, and everyone understands this; the more conflicts there are, the more they buy off weapons from us. Volumes are continuing to grow despite sanctions. Mainly, it’s Latin America and the Middle East,” he said.

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