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**Prepare for Netanyahu's Washington Speeches:
Listen for these 11 Bogus Arguments against an Iran Deal**
By Lara Friedman | Americans for Peace Now

On March 3rd, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will address a joint session of Congress, where he is expected to make the case against a nuclear deal with Iran, at least a deal that could result from the current negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 (the U.S., France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, and the United Kingdom). During this visit to Washington, Netanyahu will make other speeches and find other occasions to speak to the media in which he will no doubt, make the same case. In anticipation of these speeches and statements, it is important to "un-pack" and debunk the bogus arguments against an Iran deal that Netanyahu is most likely to be making. The eleven most prominent of those arguments are examined here.

Additional sanctions and credible threats of military action can secure a "better deal" with Iran than current negotiations.

- Decades of U.S. sanctions targeting the Iranian regime failed to achieve the goal of either compelling that regime to give up its nuclear program or causing it to fall. Likewise, years of U.S. sanctions targeting the Iranian people have failed to achieve the goal of mobilizing Iranians to either force their government to change course or to overthrow it and replace it with a more pro-West alternative.
- In recent years, multilateral, international sanctions have contributed to convincing the Iranian government to come to the negotiating table and offer real compromises with respect to its nuclear program. More U.S. sanctions today are far more likely to result in Iran's abandoning the negotiating table than to result in Iran suddenly becoming amenable to a purported "better" deal – i.e., one involving elements that no Iranian regime would ever accept.
- In such a case, it would be the U.S., not Iran, that would likely be blamed for the collapse of talks, leading to an erosion of international consensus on Iran sanctions that undermines the existing sanctions regime without achieving tangible Iranian compromises in return.
- In such a case, Iranian hardliners who oppose any compromise with the West would be strengthened, with new U.S. sanctions and the collapse of talks bolstering the argument that the U.S. and its allies are not truly interested in a deal, but want regime change. In such circumstances, it is far more likely that Iranian leaders will conclude that the urgent development of Iranian nuclear weapons is a necessary deterrent against such attack.

The only good deal with Iran is one that leaves Iran with zero enrichment capacity.

- Zero enrichment – the demand that not a single centrifuge is left spinning in Iran – is neither an achievable nor a necessary goal of negotiations.
 - It's not achievable because just as P5+1 negotiators must get a deal they can "sell" to their constituencies, Iranian negotiators must be able to sell a deal to their own constituencies as meeting their own red lines (most notably, sufficient capacity for legitimate domestic energy production and legitimate R&D purposes, preserving what Iran views as a sovereign right to enrich, and assuring that Iranian pride in the nation's scientific advances is left intact).
 - It's not necessary because assuming "zero enrichment" is genuinely shorthand for "the best possible guarantee that Iran's nuclear program will remain peaceful," this goal can be achieved through a nuclear agreement that includes strict limits on Iran's enrichment capacity and stringent safeguards and transparency with respect to Iran's nuclear facilities and materials.
 - Insisting on "zero enrichment" guarantees that such limits and safeguards are absent. Demands for zero enrichment as a condition for a deal are tantamount to rejecting any agreed-upon, negotiated solution with Iran. Alternatives offered by advocates of a zero-enrichment red-line consist of fantasy and wishful thinking ("more pressure and Iran's government will give in or be overthrown) and war-mongering ("military action can remove the threat of a nuclear Iran"). Both approaches would likely exacerbate, rather than curb, the Iranian nuclear threat.
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Any deal with Iran is a bad deal, because the mullahs can't be trusted.

- A nuclear deal with Iran would be grounded in ongoing rigorous inspections and verification mechanisms – not trust. It is those rigorous inspections and verification mechanisms that would ensure that Iran lived up to its end of a deal.
- Should Iran interfere with those inspections and verification mechanisms, or should those inspections and verification mechanisms reveal Iranian malfeasance, the international community would know immediately and have ample opportunity to prepare its response.
- Without an agreement, those rigorous inspections and verification mechanisms would be absent. The international community, recognizing that Iran cannot be trusted, would be left to worry and try to come up with policies and actions based on incomplete information.
- Even with an agreement in place, the U.S. and international community will doubtless prepare and maintain contingency plans to address the possibility that Iran will renege on the deal – including planning for military action.

It would be wrong to make any nuclear deal with Iran unless that deal also held Iran accountable for its support for terrorism and extremism, in the region and beyond.

- Achieving and implementing an agreement acceptable both to the P5+1 and Iran will require that some sanctions imposed on Iran – sanctions imposed as a direct consequence of concerns about Iran's nuclear program – be removed.
- However, an Iran nuclear deal would not change U.S. policy or impact U.S. sanctions with respect to Iran's support for terrorism. U.S. anti-terrorism legislation is for the most part separate from Iran nuclear legislation; anti-terrorist provisions that apply to countries around the world would continue to apply equally to Iran, even with a nuclear deal in place.
- A nuclear deal with Iran could, potentially, open the door for improved U.S.-Iran relations – relations – which could eventually lead to improvements in other areas of concern to the U.S., including concerns linked to Iran's support for terrorist organizations.
- Those seeking to derail Iran talks or scuttle a nuclear deal with demands related to other issues are sending a message that their true goal is not mitigating the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, but regime change in Iran. Such a message will likely strengthen hardliners, increasing the threat that Iran will indeed seek to acquire nuclear weapons and worsening Iranian behavior in the other spheres, including with respect to support for terrorism outside Iran's borders.

It would be wrong to make any nuclear deal with Iran unless that deal also held Iran accountable for its terrible record with respect to human rights and civil liberties inside Iran.

- An Iran nuclear deal would not change U.S. policy or impact U.S. sanctions with respect to Iran's record on human rights abuses, democracy, or other non-nuclear-related matters.
- By improving the conditions of Iranians overall, an Iran nuclear deal could strengthen domestic groups engaged in promoting human rights and civil liberties. It could also strengthen Iranian political forces that are more open to change. For these reasons, a nuclear deal is widely supported by human rights and democracy advocates within Iran.
- The failure of Iran diplomacy – and what this failure would mean in terms of discrediting some of Iran's more moderate political voices – could open the door to greater repression domestically.

A deal with Iran over its nuclear program will only strengthen and enrich an odious, extremist regime, and in doing so increase the threat of extremists everywhere.

- The U.S. and its P5+1 partners are pursuing a nuclear agreement with Iran not as a gift to Iran, but because curtailing the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran is in the vital interests of the U.S. and the international community, including Israel.
- A deal with Iran over its nuclear program would in no way imply U.S. approval for Iranian policies or acquiescence to Iranian bad behavior in any sphere. A deal likewise would in no way limit the ability of the U.S. and the international community to criticize or pressure Iran – just like any other country.
- Derailing talks or undermining a deal with Iran over its nuclear program will only strengthen those in Iran who believe that the West will not be satisfied with anything short of the overthrow of the current regime, and who view the militarization of Iran’s nuclear program as necessary to deter an attack.

One-year “breakout” time for Iran to become a nuclear state is way too short. If Iran decides to dash to get a bomb, it will already be too late.

- “Breakout” time does NOT refer to the time required for Iran to become a nuclear-armed state. It refers only to the time needed for Iran to produce enough weapons-grade uranium to fuel a single nuclear bomb.
- To represent a threat as a nuclear-armed state, Iran would first have to produce sufficient weapons-grade uranium to fuel at least two bombs – one to test (to prove its nuclear capabilities) and the other to hold as a deterrent against retaliation. It would also have to build both bombs, build a working delivery system, and carry out a test.
- An agreement would impede Iran’s ability to “dash” to become a nuclear-armed state by extending “breakout” time from the current 2-3 months to at least one year. It would achieve this by prohibiting Iran from enriching uranium to a level (20%) at which it could be converted into weapons-grade uranium, and by imposing limits on the number and type of centrifuges Iran would be permitted to operate, as well as on the size of Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium.
- An agreement would also impede any future Iranian nuclear weapons “dash” by extending the time required for Iran to build actual bombs and a delivery system. It would achieve this by imposing international oversight and inspections that would diminish, in an unprecedented way, Iran’s ability to pursue nuclear activities with potential military dimensions, even covertly.
- Absent an agreement, there will be no limits on Iran’s ability to build up its stockpile of enriched uranium. Absent an agreement, the U.S. and international community will revert to the longstanding status quo in which they have extremely limited and often imperfect information about what is going on inside Iran’s nuclear program.
- Should Iran renege on a nuclear deal and pursue weaponization, a one-year “breakout” time ensures that the U.S. and the international community would have ample time and opportunity to respond.

The real issue isn’t “breakout” but “sneak-out.” It doesn’t matter how many limits or safeguards you put into place – Iran will cheat and we will wake up one day to find Iran armed with nuclear bombs.

- “Sneak-out” is a danger with or without an agreement.
- An agreement will put into place inspection, oversight and verification mechanisms – with respect to facilities, equipment and supplies – that ensure that a “sneak-out” would be far more difficult for Iran to achieve and far more likely to be detected.

- Without an agreement, these inspection, oversight and verification mechanisms will not be implemented, ensuring that any “sneak-out” effort would be far more likely to go undetected.

The current negotiations are leaving in place too many Iranian centrifuges. The more centrifuges left spinning, the greater the threat Iran poses.

- Viewed in isolation, the number of centrifuges Iran is allowed to operate under an agreement does not provide a clear measure of breakout time. It thus fails to adequately calculate the threat Iran would pose should it renege on a nuclear deal and shift to a militarized nuclear program.
- To truly measure this threat requires examining the number of centrifuges, the types of centrifuges, and the size of Iran’s stockpile of enriched uranium under an agreement.
- Consistent with the interim deal that gave birth to the current negotiations, Iran has already eliminated its stockpile of 20 percent enriched uranium gas – the feedstock required to produce weapons grade uranium. By doing so, the immediate threat of Iranian “breakout” has been dramatically reduced by, in effect, emptying the cartoon bomb that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu displayed at the UN in 2014.
- A nuclear deal with the P5+1 can be expected to significantly reduce and cap the number of centrifuges spinning in Iran. A deal likewise can be expected to limit the type of centrifuges left spinning and to limit Iranian enrichment, such that Netanyahu’s cartoon bomb will not be refilled and such that weapons-grade uranium remains out-of-reach.
- Without an agreement, the number of Iran’s centrifuges can be expected to grow, and the level at which uranium will be enriched can be expected to return to 20 percent, or go even higher.

A nuclear deal with Iran will leave Iran as a threat to the world and an existential threat to Israel, will sell out our allies in the Gulf, and will fuel a nuclear arms race in the region.

- The prospect of Iran armed with nuclear weapons is indeed alarming, particularly to Israel, which exists in close proximity to Iran and which has over the years been the target of harsh threats from various Iranian political and religious figures. It is also alarming to many countries in the Middle East, who see Iran as seeking regional dominance and meddling in their affairs.
- Neither diplomacy nor military action can guarantee that Iran will not someday decide to pursue nuclear weapons. Iran long ago acquired the knowledge and expertise to do so. International pressure and sanctions have impeded Iran’s nuclear program for years, but more importantly, leaders in Iran today have decided not to pursue an active nuclear weapons program.
- A negotiated deal can bolster this decision, while further rolling back Iran’s nuclear capacity such that if Iran’s leaders someday have a change of heart, the U.S. and international community – including our friends and allies in the region – will have ample time and opportunity to take action.
- A negotiated deal with Iran would not imply U.S. endorsement of Iranian bad behavior elsewhere in the region, nor would it imply that the U.S. was abandoning traditional allies in favor of warmer ties with Iran.
- Rejecting a negotiated deal out-of-hand in favor of hardline demands for the complete eradication of Iran’s nuclear capacity is virtually guaranteed to have the opposite effect. Making the complete elimination of any Iranian nuclear capacity the end goal of U.S. policy is tantamount to demanding that the U.S. go to war, and is likely to strengthen those in Iran who view the acquisition of nuclear weapons as necessary to deter such military action. Such a policy would, in fact, be far more likely to fuel regional instability and an arms race than a negotiated deal would.

A deal that “sunsets” after 10 or 15 years is no good – it just means that Iran will wait and ready itself and then go nuclear the minute a deal ends.

- Just as there is no possibility of a “zero enrichment” deal with Iran, there is no possibility of Iran agreeing to a “permanent” deal on its nuclear program. Iran is in trouble right now because it has repeatedly violated the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), resulting in sanctions. Negotiations over Iran’s nuclear program are grounded in the understanding that by demonstrating compliance with all of its NPT obligations, Iran will no longer be in violation of the NPT and Iran’s tenure in the international doghouse – at least with respect to its nuclear program – can come to a close (at least so long as Iran remains in compliance).
- An Iran nuclear agreement – whether its provisions are in place for 10 years, or 15 years, or however many years are agreed on – would dramatically mitigate the threat of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. For the period of the deal, the agreement would dramatically curtail Iran’s nuclear program, extending breakout time from a couple of months to a year, making it much harder for Iran to shift course and making the path to weaponization far longer than it would be without an agreement.
- At the time that an agreement sunsets (and different provisions would likely sunset at different times), Iran would still remain a member of the NPT and subject to the requirements of that treaty. Iran would also remain bound by an Additional Protocol to the treaty, granting UN inspectors greater authority in monitoring Iran’s nuclear program. Following a decade or more of intrusive inspections and other oversight mechanisms, the U.S. and international community would at that time also be in a far stronger position to judge Iran’s actions and intentions vis-à-vis its nuclear program than they would have been without a deal. If, subsequent to a deal “sunsetting,” they determine that Iran’s leaders are shifting course and pursuing weaponization, the U.S. and international community will have ample time and opportunity to take action – and their decisions at that time will benefit from more than a decade of insights into Iran’s nuclear program and more than a decade of improved planning based on those insights.
- Optimally, by the time a deal sunsets Iran would recognize the tangible benefits of continued curtailment of its nuclear program – benefits that would be imperiled if, in the period after an agreement “sunsets,” Iran decided to shift course and pursue weaponization of its nuclear program.