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Verification Requirements for a Nuclear Agreement with Iran

Synopsis of an independent task force report by the Federation of American Scientists

The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) convened a non-partisan [Nuclear Verification Capabilities Independent Task Force](#) to examine the technical and policy requirements to adequately verify a comprehensive or other sustained nuclear agreement with Iran. The object of the report is to set out critical objective criteria to evaluate the risks associated with any proposed agreement. The leading members of the Task Force are Christopher Bidwell, Orde Kittrie, John Lauder and Harvey Rishikof. Through various methods the task force interviewed or met with over 70 experts from various technical and policy disciplines.

This project has a particular urgency given that negotiations are underway with Iran on its nuclear program. These negotiations now create a question for the U.S. policy community: What monitoring and verification measures and tools will the U.S., its allies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) require, in relation to a comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran, in order to “ensure Iran’s nuclear programme will be exclusively peaceful?” The goal of the [report](#) is to address such concerns by mapping out a sufficiently rigorous monitoring architecture.

The task force recognizes that not all recommended measures will be easily negotiable or ready for rapid implementation. An agreement may not therefore include all of the six potential agreement elements and three proposed recommendations for the U.S. Government. However, doing less may result in increased risk of undetected noncompliance. The risk-benefit assessment, as well as the question of how long each of these measures should remain in place are ultimately political judgments for the executive branch and Congress to decide. In the [report](#), the Task Force outlines nine recommendations relating to monitoring and verification of an agreement with Iran. They are as follows:

Six Elements of an Effective Agreement:

1. The agreement should require Iran to provide, prior to the next phase of sanctions relief, a comprehensive declaration that is correct and complete concerning all aspects of its nuclear program both current and past.
2. The agreement should provide the IAEA, for the duration of the agreement, access without delay to all sites, equipment, persons and documents requested by the IAEA, as currently required by UN Security Council Resolution 1929.
3. The agreement should provide that any material acts of non-cooperation with inspectors are a violation of the agreement.
4. The agreement should provide for the establishment of a consultative commission, which should be designed and operate in ways to maximize its effectiveness in addressing disputes and, if possible, building a culture of compliance within Iran.

5. The agreement should provide that all Iranian acquisition of sensitive items for its post-agreement licit nuclear program, and all acquisition of sensitive items that could be used in a post-agreement illicit nuclear program, must take place through a designated transparent channel.
6. The agreement should include provisions designed to preclude Iran from outsourcing key parts of its nuclear weapons program to a foreign country such as North Korea.

Three Proposed U.S. Government Actions to Facilitate Effective Implementation of an Agreement:

1. The U.S. Government should enhance its relevant monitoring capabilities, invest resources in monitoring the Iran agreement, and structure its assessment and reporting of any Iranian noncompliance so as to maximize the chances that significant anomalies will come to the fore and not be overlooked or considered *de minimis*.
2. The U.S. Government and its allies should maintain the current sanctions regime architecture so that it can be ratcheted up incrementally in order to deter and respond commensurately to any Iranian non-compliance with the agreement.
3. The U.S. Government should establish a joint congressional/executive branch commission to monitor compliance with the agreement, similar to Congress having created the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor the implementation of the 1975 Helsinki Accords.

The key to monitoring measures working effectively to reduce risk is the synergy created among them. For example, data declarations can help define the locations and objects of inspections, routine inspections can audit the declarations, national and international unilateral monitoring and intelligence means can detect anomalies, and challenge inspections and the work of consultative bodies can gather more information relevant to the resolution of those anomalies.

Some or all of the monitoring activities provided for under the agreement with Iran will fall to the IAEA. In addition, the United States and other P5+1 governments will undoubtedly wish to use their national means to also monitor Iran's nuclear program. The Administration and Congress can play a positive and strong role in insisting on effective verification, providing the necessary resources for monitoring tasks, and bringing attention to potentially emergent compliance issues.

The current set of sanctions has helped bring Iran to the bargaining table, and the international community's bargaining power is strong. In short, if the monitoring elements that we recommend are not pursued now to diminish the risks of deception, it is difficult to envision that Iran would be compliant in the future, post-sanctions environment. Hence, the task force believes a bad deal is worse than no deal. The hope is that this report helps to define the monitoring elements that should be part of a good deal and effectively implemented agreement.

For more information or to schedule an interview with Christopher Bidwell, please contact Katie Colten at 202-454-4694 or kcolten@fas.org.

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The full report can be found on the FAS website at www.fas.org*