

# **KEEPING THE CRAZIES OCCUPIED WHILE FINISHING IRAN NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS**

Last Thursday, the US announced that it was adding more companies and more people to its blacklist of those banned from making deals with Iran as part of the overall sanctions aimed at Iran developing nuclear weapon technology. Iran responded the same day by withdrawing its personnel from the technical talks that were underway in Vienna that were aimed at implementing the interim agreement that Iran had signed with the P5+1 group of nations last month in Geneva.

Fredrik Dahl and Adrian Croft of Reuters described those developments in a Friday article:

The United States on Thursday black-listed additional companies and people under sanctions aimed at preventing Iran from obtaining the capability to make nuclear weapons, U.S. officials said. Iran says its atomic work is purely peaceful.

Treasury and State Department officials said the move showed the Geneva deal “does not, and will not, interfere with our continued efforts to expose and disrupt those supporting Iran’s nuclear program or seeking to evade our sanctions.”

The somewhat unexpected move by the US provoked anger in Iran:

One diplomat said the Iranian delegation suddenly announced late on Thursday evening – hours after Washington made its decision public – that it was

returning to Tehran.

The Iranians said "they had received instructions from Tehran to stop the discussions and fly back to Tehran," the diplomat said. "It was quite unexpected."

It seems quite possible that the move by the US was meant to toss a bit of red meat to the war monger crowd. Rumors had been building for some time that new sanctions bills would be introduced in both the House and the Senate. Adding to the harsh economic sanctions on Iran just after they have signed a promising agreement would seem a sure-fire way to prevent a final agreement being reached. True to form, one of the leading war mongers, John McCain, appeared on CNN on Sunday and managed to get headlines such as the one in the Washington Post reading "McCain says Iran sanctions bill 'very likely'".

But, if we look a little closer, we see room for a bit of hope. It turns out that the sanctions bill McCain now advocates would not add new sanctions unless the six month negotiating period with Iran laid out in last month's agreement expires without a final agreement being reached. By delaying any new sanctions so that they would only be implemented if the talks fail, McCain and the other war mongers actually have a chance to help rather than hinder the negotiations. Knowing that failed talks mean even worse economic hardships rather than merely continuing the current set of sanctions would seem to place more pressure on Iran to come to agreement with the P5+1 powers.

The weekend saw discussion by telephone between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. They discussed how to move the talks ahead.

It would appear that the discussion between Kerry and Zarif was fruitful, as we learn from Mehr News this morning that the interrupted

technical discussions are now set to resume:

Mehr News reported that Abbas Araghchi had met Catherine Ashton in EU headquarters in Brussels this morning local time to discuss Iran and Powers negotiations.

They agreed to resume expert-level talks. Araghchi denounced the US position, to which Catherine Ashton responded with ensuring him that Powers were resolute to implement the Geneva deal articles.

As long as the war-crazed faction spends its time cooking up new sanctions that only take effect after the set negotiating period, I like the chances for the diplomats to come to a final agreement. It hardly seems necessary to note, Iran patiently explains in Fars News again today that any new sanctions taking place before a final agreement is reached would end all negotiations:

Iran warned on Tuesday that any new sanction against Tehran by the signatories of the Geneva agreement will kill the long-awaited nuclear deal between the two sides.

"One of the key issues mentioned in the Joint Plan of Action (the Geneva agreement) under the title of the other sides' commitments is avoiding imposition of new sanctions," Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Marziyeh Afkham told reporters in Tehran today.

"We have announced before that any action to impose new sanctions means the death of the Joint Plan of Action and we hope that the other sides will be serious about protection and commitment to the Joint Plan of Action, protect the spirit ruling the Plan and adopt constructive measures to implement it," she added.

Will McCain and his fellow crazies play nicely  
while the adults carry on their negotiations?