

AMANO, SANGER STILL TRYING TO DISRUPT P5+1 DEAL WITH IRAN

Monday is the deadline set by the P5+1 group of nations and Iran for achieving a final agreement on steps to assure the world that Iran's nuclear program is only aimed at the civilian uses of producing electricity and providing isotopes for medical use. With that deadline rapidly approaching, those who take a more hawkish view toward Iran and wish to see no agreement are doing their best to disrupt the negotiations as they enter the home stretch to an agreement or another extension of the interim agreement, which is nearing a year under which Iran has met all of its obligations.

A primary tool used by those who prefer war with Iran over diplomacy is Yukiya Amano, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Keeping right on schedule, Amano has interjected himself into the story on the final stage P5+1 talks (in which IAEA has no role) and one of his chief transcribers, Fredrik Dahl of Reuters, has fulfilled his usual role of providing an outlet for those wishing to disrupt a deal. Today's emission from Amano [*Note: During the time that this post was being written, Reuters changed the Fredrik Dahl piece that is being referenced. Here is an upload of the version of the story as it appeared with an 8:09 am Eastern time stamp. Usually, Reuters just sends new stories out with new url's, but the url under which the 8:09 version loaded for me now loads a 10:09 story by different reporters discussing a likely extension of negotiations to March.*]:

Iran has yet to explain suspected atomic bomb research to the U.N. nuclear agency, its head said on Thursday, just four days before a deadline for a comprehensive deal between Iran and six world powers to end the 12-year-old

controversy.

After nearly a year of difficult diplomacy, Washington is pushing for agreement on at least the outline of a future accord and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry will attend talks with Iran, France, Germany, Britain, Russia and China on Friday.

But Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, made clear it was far from satisfied, saying it was not in a position to provide "credible assurance" Iran had no undeclared nuclear material and activities.

It comes as no surprise that Amano would try to disrupt the talks at such a critical juncture. Recall that he replaced Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohammad elBaradei in 2009. Amano laid low for a while, but in 2011 came out swinging against Iran. By moving in such a politically motivated way, I noted at that time that Amano was doing huge damage to the credibility of the IAEA after its terrific work under elBaradei.

Amano was carefully chosen and groomed for his role at IAEA.

Wikileaks documents revealed in 2010 showed how Amano assured US "diplomats" that he would be solidly in the US camp when it came to pursuing charges against Iran's nuclear program:

Amano reminded [the] ambassador on several occasions that he would need to make concessions to the G-77 [the developing countries group], which correctly required him to be fair-minded and independent, but that he was solidly in the U.S. court on every key strategic decision, from high-level personnel appointments to the handling of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program.

More candidly, Amano noted the

importance of maintaining a certain “constructive ambiguity” about his plans, at least until he took over for DG ElBaradei in December.

And what of these “possible military dimensions” of Iran’s nuclear work that Amano is holding against Iran? They are based on a total fabrication known as the laptop of death. Further, IAEA is not structured or staffed in a way for it to be the appropriate vehicle for determining whether work in Iran is weapons-related. It is, however, built for monitoring and accounting for enrichment of uranium, where it has found Iran to divert no material from its declared nuclear power plant fuel cycle.

Amano is far from alone in his campaign to disrupt the talks. Recall that a couple of weeks ago, David Sanger took to the front page of the New York Times to plant the erroneous idea the Iran was nearing an agreement to outsource its enrichment of uranium to Russia. The Times never noted nor corrected the error, which, conveniently for Sanger and other opponents of a deal, could give hardliners in Iran another opening for opposing any deal.

Sanger returned to the front page of the Times on Monday to gleefully list the forces he sees arrayed against any deal with Iran. Remarkably, Sanger did at least make an offhand correction to his earlier error (but of course there still is no note or change on the original erroneous report). He only does this, though, while also describing how he thinks Russia could undermine the breakthrough in which they have played a huge role:

Perhaps the most complex political player is Russia. It has remained a key element of the negotiating team, despite its confrontations with the West over Ukraine. It has been a central player in negotiating what may prove the key to a deal: a plan for Iran to ship much of its low-enriched uranium to Russian

territory for conversion into fuel for the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

But Russian officials may want an extension of the talks that keeps any real agreement in limbo – and thus keeps Iranian oil off the market, so that it cannot further depress falling prices.

So, yes, Sanger finally admits the deal would be for Russia to convert low enriched uranium to fuel rods, not to do the enrichment itself, but only while also cheering on what he sees as a path for Russia keep Iranian oil off international markets.

Missing from Sanger's list of forces lined up against a deal with Iran are those working behind the scenes in the US intelligence and "diplomatic" communities. Those forces gave state secrets to United Against Nuclear Iran to be used in false allegations against a Greek shipping firm providing goods to Iran that were not subject to sanctions. We still don't know what that information was nor how UANI came into its possession because the Justice Department has intervened to quash disclosure in the lawsuit resulting from the false allegations.

As we enter what is slated to be the final weekend of the negotiations, the stakes are clear. Barack Obama has gladly jumped on board with most neocon dreams of open war in many of their target nations. Iran remains a huge prize for them, but so far Obama has shown remarkable resolve in pushing for an agreement that could avert a catastrophic war that would make the current ones look only like small skirmishes. I'm hoping for the best this weekend, but I also worry about what opponents of the negotiations may have in store for their final move.