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U.N. Backs Broader Sanctions On Tehran

Security Council Votes to Ban Arms Exports, Freeze Assets

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UNITED NATIONS, March 24 -- The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously Saturday to approve a resolution that bans all Iranian arms exports and freezes some of the financial assets of 28 Iranian individuals and entities linked to [Iran's](#) military and nuclear agencies.

The 15 to 0 vote came one day after President Mahmoud Admadinejad canceled plans to travel to New York to confront the Security Council, leaving his foreign minister to speak in his place. It unfolded as 15 British sailors and marines seized by Iranian naval forces were transferred to Tehran, escalating diplomatic tensions between the two countries. (See story, A12)

The 15-nation panel imposed the latest sanctions in response to Iran's refusal to abide by repeated U.N. demands to stop its most sensitive nuclear activities, including the enrichment of uranium and the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel.

The council also threatened to impose new penalties on Tehran after 60 days if it fails to stop its nuclear activities and provide verifiable assurance that it is not secretly pursuing a nuclear weapon.

The measures adopted Saturday fell far short of the punishing trade, travel and military sanctions initially proposed by the United States and its European partners. But they insisted they were pleased with the outcome.

"We got more than we thought we were going to get" in this resolution, said R. Nicholas Burns, the U.S. undersecretary of state for political affairs. He also said that it criminalizes Iran's military support for extremists and exposes its political isolation. "If Iran has Qatar, a Gulf Arab state; and Indonesia, a Muslim state; and [South Africa](#), a leading member of the nonaligned movement, voting for these sanctions, Iran is in trouble internationally."

Iran's Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki told the council after the vote that its action was "unlawful, unnecessary and unjustifiable" and that "pressure and intimidation" would not force Iran to abandon its right, under the 1970 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, to develop nuclear energy. He characterized those targeted by the sanctions as "heroes."

"Suspension is neither an option nor a solution," he said. "We realize now that we must be prepared to pay the price for our dignity and our independence."

After the vote, the council's five permanent members -- the United States, [Russia](#), [Britain](#), [France](#) and [China](#) issued a statement deploring Iran's "failure" to comply with U.N. resolutions but reiterated an offer to talk to Iran to resolve the nuclear standoff.

The resolution goes beyond Iran's nuclear program, targeting individuals and institutions that have been linked to Iran's widening military role in the Middle East.

For instance, the resolution imposes an asset freeze on several commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, including Brig. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, commander of Iran's Quds force, which oversees Iran's support for foreign Islamic revolutionary movements -- including Hezbollah, Hamas and Iraqi Shiite militants.

The resolution's widening scope suggests that the United States and its allies are seeking to use the council as part of an effort to contain Iran, and some council members and observers were concerned that Western powers may be using the council to undercut the regime. "Is this aimed at preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons, or is this regime change in another form?" asked Jean du Preez, director of the international organizations and nonproliferation program

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Saturday's vote ended more than five weeks of intense talks on how to respond to Iran's defiance.

The resolution's chief sponsors -- Britain, France, [Germany](#) and the United States -- secured backing from China and Russia only after dropping several of the toughest measures, including calls for a travel ban on select Iranian officials, a cutoff of billions of dollars in export credits for companies trading with Iran and a prohibition on arms imports by Iran.

They also overcame opposition from South Africa, Qatar and Indonesia by adding provisions that highlighted the importance of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East and the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in resolving the nuclear dispute with Iran.

"The purpose of the new Security Council resolution is not to punish Iran but to urge Iran to return to the negotiations," said Wang Guangya, China's U.N. ambassador.

The resolution prohibits Iran from being able to "supply, sell or transfer" arms, and calls on nations to "exercise vigilance and restraint" in selling combat aircraft, attack helicopters, tanks, warships, missiles and other heavy weapons to Iran.

The resolution will also make it more awkward for select Iranian officials and scientists to travel abroad.

The resolution expands an asset freeze to some Iranian institutions and individuals -- including Bank Sepah and the Esfahan Nuclear Fuel Research and Production Center -- that are allegedly linked to Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. The restrictions, however, will not apply to contracts they signed before being placed on the list.

"The impact is primarily political rather than practical," said Abbas Milani, the director of Stanford University's Iranian Studies program. The financial and military restrictions are "rather limited and toothless" but they are having a profound psychological impact on investors and eroding President Ahmadinejad's standing in Iran.

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