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Draft targets Iran military, bank

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Diplomats from U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany to discuss draft
- U.S., European partners say the world should press for more curbs on Iran
- Rice: U.S., other members of Security Council will try to get a final draft in weeks
- U.S. cut off key Iranian military, banking institutions from U.S. financial system

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- A draft plan for new United Nations sanctions against Iran would punish a branch of the Iranian armed forces and one of Iran's largest banks, despite U.S. re-evaluation of Iran's nuclear weapons intentions, U.S. officials said Monday.



AP PHOTO/FILE
An anti-aircraft gun position is seen at the nuclear enrichment facility in Natanz, Iran, in a September photo.

A preliminary sanctions plan drafted by France is under consideration by leading members of the U.N. Security Council, one official said. The United States, which has been pressing for continued sanctions pressure on Iran, supports the package.

Diplomats from the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany are to discuss the draft by telephone on Tuesday. If passed by the Security Council, the plan would slap a third round of sanctions on Iran for defying international demands that it roll back and explain its nuclear program.

Iran claims its nuclear development is peaceful, but until last week the United States and Western allies had countered that Iran was hiding plans for a bomb. The latest U.S. intelligence assessment on Iran, however, says the clerical regime once had a

bomb program but shelved it four years ago.

The United States and European partners say the world should press for more curbs on Iran, in part out of fear that Iran could restart its weapons program. But what was already a tough sell is now a lot harder and a long way from taking effect.

Russia and China, which have veto power at the Security Council, have questioned the need for additional coercive measures against Iran, even before last week's revision of U.S. claims that Iran is actively seeking a weapon now.

Two U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity to describe negotiations among the major Security Council powers. They said the draft recommends freezing financial or other assets of people, businesses and banks suspected of involvement in the nuclear program.

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Some of the targets on the new list, including the Quds Force and Iran's Bank Mellī, are entities that the United States has already singled out for separate financial sanctions.

"They are in there now, but who knows what this will look like after the Russians and Chinese get through with it," one official said.

The proposal targets the Quds Force, part of Iran's powerful and pervasive Revolutionary Guard Corps, for exporting banned weapons.

The draft would punish Bank Mellī, one of three banks the United States picked out in a sweeping sanctions program in October.

Speaking Monday to a [women's foreign policy](#) forum, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the United States and other members of the Security Council will try to get a final draft within a few weeks.

"Most states have found that we have the right strategy, and the key is still to get Iran to stop its enrichment and reprocessing so that we can begin negotiations to meet the legitimate need for civilian nuclear power," Rice said.

In October, the Bush administration announced its harshest sanctions on Iran in nearly three decades -- cutting off key Iranian military and banking institutions from the American financial system for Tehran's alleged support for terrorism and nuclear ambitions.

The administration slapped sanctions on Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps, a main unit of its defense ministry, three of its largest banks and eight people who it said are engaged in missile trade and back extremist groups throughout the Middle East. [E-mail to a friend](#)

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