

P5+1 Reach Interim Deal with Iran

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Nov. 24—At 3 a.m. in Geneva today, the P5+1 (the UN Security Council Permanent Five—U.S., U.K., Russia, China France—plus Germany) and Iran signed a six-month interim deal that will freeze much of Iran’s nuclear program in return for billions of dollars in temporary sanctions relief. According to a senior U.S. intelligence official involved in the process, the agreement is an important interim step toward avoiding a military conflict in the Persian Gulf that could explode out of control.

The source reported that the essentials of the deal were put on the table Nov. 21, during a meeting among U.S., European Union, and Iranian negotiators, and that it took several days to get approval from Tehran for the final wording. On Nov. 23, Secretary of State John Kerry met with EU negotiator Catherine Ashton and Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif for 90 minutes. Immediately after that meeting, Zarif met with the Russian and Chinese foreign ministers, who gave their strong support to a deal, effectively guaranteeing that Iran would not be double-crossed. “The Chinese did a great deal of hand-holding,” the source emphasized.

Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani had spoken by phone on Nov. 19, with China’s President Xi Jinping. During that conversation, Rouhani asked that the Chinese serve as “honest brokers” and guarantors that any deal would be in Iran’s interest.

The source further emphasized that, while Secretary of State Kerry’s role was spotlighted in the news accounts of the talks, it was the consensus among all six of the P5+1 countries that was vital to overcoming the final hurdles.

The source confirmed that the deal involves a halt of construction at the Arak heavy-water reactor site, a freeze on any new centrifuges or other advanced enrichment equipment, daily inspections of all relevant sites, and a release of approximately \$7 billion in frozen assets and other sanctions relief, including the importation of food and medicine, as well as commercial aviation spare parts.

The White House gave its full support to the talks, in part because President Obama has been desperate to reverse the plunge of his approval ratings, brought on by the Obamacare fiasco and other policy failures.

Backchannel Talks

The core team that handled the negotiations for the United States was noteworthy. According to a report published this morning in *Al Monitor*, Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, who was formerly the chief U.S. arms control negotiator and ambassador to Russia, conducted extensive backchannel talks with the Iranians, which began even prior to the Rouhani election last June. Those talks accelerated in August, and led to the exchange of letters and phone calls between Presidents Obama and Rouhani in September.

In addition to Burns and Wendy Sherman, who led the Geneva talks, two other Administration national security officials were deeply involved in the backchannel efforts. Jake Sullivan is now the chief national security aide to Vice President Joe Biden. Previously, he was a Bill Clinton campaign advisor, and served as head of policy planning at the State Department under



State Department

Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Kerry confer in Geneva, Nov. 24.

President Clinton. When he moved to Biden's office, the other key backchannel negotiator, Puneet Talwar, moved to the National Security Council. Talwar was a longtime Biden aide on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which Biden chaired before being elected Vice President. Talwar was previously the top national security aide in the VP's office. Contrary to some news accounts, longtime Obama confidante Valerie Jarrett was not an important player in the process.

The source reported that, based on the document signed in Geneva, the deal can be defended against the anticipated attacks from Israel, Saudi Arabia, and hardliners in the Congress.

Earlier in the week, Lyndon LaRouche had noted that the mounting attacks on President Obama, including a flurry of leaks about deep splits in his national security team and overall paralysis at the White House, had weakened the President's ability to start a war. The pummeling that Obama has taken in recent weeks created the possibility for the war-avoidance faction at the Pentagon, in the intelligence community, and at the State Department, to reach the successful interim deal.

Some of the most devastating attacks on the shrinking Obama Presidency have, according to sources, come from within the White House itself. Frustrated senior staffers were among the key sources for exposés of the disintegration of the Obama decision-making apparatus. The most prominent of these was published in the inaugural issue of *Politico* magazine, by George-

town Law Prof. Rosa Brooks, a former Pentagon official. Brooks' article, "Obama versus the Generals," detailed the cutoff of top military brass, including Joint Chiefs Chair Gen. Martin Dempsey, from any decision-making at the White House. Dempsey recently gave an interview in which he highlighted the war-avoidance collaboration among the United States, Russia, and China as a top priority of his JCS team.

White House staffers also reported that members of the Obama Cabinet have been cut out of any deliberations, to the point that they are being sent out to defend policies that they do not even understand. One article provided a psychoanalysis of the President, identifying him as suffering from "compensatory narcissism." The clinical diagnosis matched precisely with the assessment by LaRouche, who delivered a warning about Obama's "Nero complex" on April 11, 2009, in a now famous international [webcast](#).

War Danger Remains High

While President Obama has been increasingly boxed in by the exposés, and by the growing public revolt against his murderous austerity policies, the danger of a provocation for war remains high. The British Crown's two "breakaway allies" in the Middle East—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Saudi Arabia's intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan—are hysterical over the prospect of an Iran deal and can be expected to do everything in their power to wreck it. On Nov. 17, the *Sunday Times* of London reported that a secret agreement had been struck between Riyadh and Tel Aviv, providing Saudi overflight rights and other support for an Israeli strike on Iran. Top Netanyahu Cabinet officials, including Defense Minister Danny Ya'alon, have made statements in the past week, indicating that Israel has been preparing for several years to carry out unilateral strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Following the announcement of the Geneva deal, Netanyahu immediately denounced the agreement as a "bad deal," and vowed to stop it. However, Netanyahu does not have the unanimous backing of his own top generals and intelligence chiefs, who have publicly stated in recent days that a verifiable deal that prevents Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapon would be good for Israeli security. And within Saudi Arabia, there are growing signs that Bandar's reckless operations in support of al-Qaeda in Iraq and Syria are not supported by all factions of the royal family.