

# Iran to allow nuclear checks

By Ed Johnson  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran agreed yesterday to suspend uranium enrichment and give inspectors unrestricted access to its nuclear facilities as demanded by the U.N. watchdog agency, a step that could ease the standoff over fears Iran is seeking to build nuclear weapons.

The announcement came after weeks of pressure on Iran to meet an Oct. 31 deadline to come clean on its nuclear program, which Washington, D.C., believes aims to build a nuclear arsenal. The United States — which has led the charge for the U.N. Security Council to take action against Tehran — gave a cautious welcome.

If Iran follows through with its promises, it "would be a positive step in the right direction," White House press secretary Scott McClellan said. "Full compliance by Iran will now be essential."

Iran, which says its nuclear programs aims only for electricity production, made the commitments after three European foreign ministers came to Iran to press the demands by the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Tehran did not say when it would take the steps, though a British official said it would likely be before the deadline.

Iran also agreed to hand over other information long sought by the IAEA, said diplomats in Vienna, Austria, where the IAEA is based. Most importantly,

said the diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, Iran promised to account for the origin of traces of weapons-grade uranium IAEA inspectors discovered at two facilities, raising alarm bells in Vienna and Washington.

IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei has called those traces, found in environmental samples, the most troubling aspect of Iran's nuclear activities. Iran says the contamination was on equipment it imported for peaceful nuclear purposes, but it resisted IAEA requests that it name the country of origin. Once the agency knows where the equipment comes from, it can test the truth of Iran's claims.

The direct intervention by the foreign ministers of Britain, Germany and France — who flew to Tehran for talks yesterday, after which Iranian officials announced their promises — highlighted the differing strategies Europe and Washington have toward Iran's Islamic government.

The United States characterized Iran as part of an "axis of evil" — alongside Iraq, whose regime U.S. troops later ousted. Washington has pushed fellow members of the IAEA board to declare Tehran in breach of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

That would likely prompt the U.N. Security Council to impose sanctions on Iran.

The head of Israel's military intelligence warned yesterday that if Iran completes its program for enriching

uranium, it would be able to produce its own nuclear weapons without outside help by the summer of 2004.

The Europeans have tried to engage the Tehran government. Yesterday, the three ministers promised that if Iran does meet its commitments, their countries will help it get peaceful nuclear technology.

The intervention to help resolve the nuclear dispute with Iran also gave the three European powers the chance to show unity after the divisions of the Iraq war, in which France and Germany opposed military action, while Britain sided with Washington.

"The Europeans are united on Iran," said Volker Perthes, a German foreign policy analyst. "Naturally, they are eager to demonstrate that unity."

Europe, he said, wanted to show it "can wield influence in a different way than the Americans did in Iraq ... It was a signal: We also don't want Iran to develop their nuclear program ... but we have something else on offer — cooperation, stronger economic integration."

Iran has been keen to avoid the Security Council sanctions that could result from missing the deadline. Iran has allowed IAEA inspectors to view some sites, including at least one military facility, but for weeks has hesitated at making a full commitment to the IAEA demands.

The secretary of Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council,



Vahid Salemi/Associated Press

Iranian students protest what they see as Iran giving ground on the nuclear issue.

Hasan Rowhani, told reporters after his meeting with the three Europeans yesterday that Iran would sign an additional protocol to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty allowing inspectors to enter any site they deem fit without notice.

"The protocol should not threaten our national security, national interests and national pride," he told reporters. In a statement, Iran said it would abide by the protocol even before it is ratified by parliament, as is required.

Rowhani said that for an "interim period," Iran will suspend nuclear enrichment — though he did not say for how long — to "create a new atmosphere of trust and confidence."

A joint Iranian-British-French-German statement included a reiteration of

Iran's position that "nuclear weapons have no place in Iran's defense doctrine and that its nuclear program and activities have been exclusively in the peaceful domain."

Jack Straw of Britain, Joschka Fischer of Germany and Dominique de Villepin of France said in Tehran that if Iran proves its nuclear program is only for energy production, they would make it easier for it to get nuclear technology. Iran has accused the United States of using its influence to block such purchases.

Fischer told reporters that signing and ratifying the additional protocol and stopping enrichment is "very important, and that based on this, we can move forward in a serious and honest dialogue."



Associated Press

# Senate approves 'partial birth' abortion ban

By Jim Abrams  
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Senate voted yesterday to ban the practice that critics call partial birth abortion, sending President Bush a measure that supporters and foes alike said could alter the future of U.S. abortion rights. A court challenge is certain.

Years in the making, the bill imposes the most far-reaching limits on abortion since the Supreme Court in 1973 confirmed a woman's right to end a pregnancy.

"This is an enormous day. It's been a long seven-year fight about the issue of partial birth abortion," said Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan. He was a leader of the drive to end abortions, generally carried out in the second or third

trimester, in which a fetus is partially delivered before being killed.

"This is indeed a historic day," said Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., lead opponent of the legislation, "because for the first time in history Congress is banning a medical procedure that is considered medically necessary by physicians."

The 64-34 vote came three weeks after the House passed the same measure by 281-142.

Bush had urged Congress to pass the ban, which Republicans had pursued since the GOP captured the House in 1995, and the president had said he would sign it into law.

But opponents said the first federal ban on abortion since the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision was unconstitutional and, like similar state laws, would be struck down.

The president, said Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J. "will become the first United States president to criminalize a safe medical procedure." Doctors who violate the ban would be subject to prison terms of up to two years.

The two sides differed on the frequency and definition of partial birth abortion, which is not a formal medical term.

The bill defines partial birth abortion as delivery of a fetus "until, in the case of a headfirst presentation, the entire fetal head is outside the body of the mother, or, in the case of the breech presentation, any part of the fetal trunk past the navel is outside the body of the mother for the purpose of performing an overt act that the person knows will kill the partially delivered living fetus."

Opponents of the legislation said that, as defined in the bill, it could apply to

several safe and common procedures, and that the real goal of the legislation was to erode overall abortion rights.

"I see what this is about ... this is about politics," said Boxer, an opponent of the legislation. "I never dreamed I'd be down here with senators who think they know more than doctors."

But Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., chief sponsor of the bill, said the procedure was both inhumane and unnecessary. "We can't allow this kind of brutality to corrupt us. It makes a much more brutal and harsher country if we stand here and say, yes, for whatever reason, we are going to allow this to occur."

Several groups, including the National Abortion Federation and the Center for Reproductive Rights, plan to challenge the measure in court as soon as it is signed into law.

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