

# Iran nuke deal blocked after key inspections refused

- 16:22 25 November 2014 by [Debora MacKenzie](#)
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The world will have to wait a few more months to see if talking can clarify Iran's nuclear plans. A deadline of 24 November had been set for Iran and the West to agree control measures allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to verify that the country's nuclear activities are peaceful. In return, sanctions that have crippled Iran's economy would be lifted.

But on Monday, negotiators said they would need another seven months, without spelling out why. However, an [IAEA report earlier this month](#) suggests a reason, saying that "the Agency [cannot] provide credible assurance about the absence of undeclared nuclear materials and activities".

A year ago, Iran promised to cut back some nuclear activities and start talks. On Monday, [US Secretary of State John Kerry said that](#) Iran had, as agreed, given up all of its 20-per-cent-enriched uranium hexafluoride, a form close to weapons-grade. He added that the country had stopped making more of the substance, frozen work on a heavy-water reactor that can make bomb-grade plutonium, and let IAEA inspectors track more of its uranium production process.

But the IAEA complains that Iran has not provided all the access it promised, especially to a [military installation at Parchin](#), the site of alleged high-explosives experiments and neutron-transport research aimed at bomb design. Early this month, the sides planned to resume discussing this subject after 24 November – suggesting they knew then talks would not be over.

## Iran nuclear talks extended seven months after failing to meet deadline

BY [LOUIS CHARBONNEAU](#) AND [FREDRIK DAHL](#)

VIENNA Mon Nov 24, 2014 3:15pm EST

(Reuters) - Iran and six powers failed on Monday for a second time this year to resolve their 12-year dispute over Tehran's nuclear ambitions, and gave themselves seven more months to overcome the

deadlock that has prevented an historic deal.

Western officials said they were aiming to secure an agreement on the substance of a final accord by March but that more time would be needed to reach a consensus on the all-important technical details.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, who is trying to win relief from crippling international economic sanctions by patching up relations with the West, said the gap between the sides had narrowed at talks in Vienna.

"It is true that we could not reach an agreement but we can still say that big steps have been taken," he told state TV.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry gave a more somber assessment, saying "real and substantial progress had been made but adding that "some significant points of disagreement" remained.

"These talks are not going to get easier just because we extend them. They're tough. They've been tough. And they're going to stay tough," he told reporters in Vienna.

Under an interim deal reached by the six powers and Iran a year ago in Geneva, Tehran halted higher level uranium enrichment in exchange for a limited easing of the financial and trade sanctions which have badly hurt its economy, including access to some frozen oil revenues abroad.

Monday marked the second time a self-imposed deadline for a final settlement has passed without any deal. British Foreign Secretary

Philip Hammond told reporters that the target date had been extended to June 30, 2015.

Tehran dismisses Western fears that its nuclear program might have military aims, saying it is entirely peaceful. However, the six powers - the United States, France, Germany, Russia, China and Britain - want to curb the uranium enrichment further to lengthen the time Iran would need to build a bomb.

## PRESSURE AT HOME

"I am certain that we will reach the final accord, if not today, then tomorrow," said Rouhani, who discussed the nuclear issue with Russian President Vladimir Putin by phone on Monday. An unashamed pragmatist, Rouhani won election by a landslide last year on promises to work to end Iran's international isolation.

But he made clear that Tehran was taking a tough line at the talks. "There is no question the nuclear technology and facilities of the Islamic Republic of Iran will remain active and today the negotiating sides know that pressure and sanctions against Iran were futile," he said.

Rouhani faces heavy pressure from hardline conservatives at home who have already blocked his drive to ease restrictions on Iranians' individual freedom.

The U.S. administration of President Barack Obama must also

overcome strong domestic misgivings.

Three influential Republican senators said the extension should be coupled with increased sanctions and a requirement that any final agreement be sent to Congress for approval. The three - John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte - said in a statement that a "bad deal" with Iran would start a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

But Kerry defended the decision not to abandon the talks. "We would be fools," he said, raising his voice, "to walk away from a situation where the breakout time (for Iran to develop a nuclear weapon) has already been expanded rather than narrowed, and the world is safer because this program is in place."

In Washington, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said imposing fresh sanctions now could be counterproductive.

## HEADLINE AGREEMENT

Hammond said the expectation was that Iran would continue to refrain from sensitive atomic activity. There was a clear target to reach a "headline agreement" of substance within the next three months and talks would resume next month, he said.

It is unclear where next month's talks will take place, he said, noting that during the extension period, Tehran will be able to continue to access around \$700 million per month in sanctions

relief.

A report by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, showed that Iran had reduced its stockpile of low-enriched uranium gas and taken other action to comply with last year's interim agreement with world powers.

But one senior Western diplomat expressed pessimism. "It's been 10 years that proposals and ideas have been put forward," he said on condition of anonymity. "There's nothing left. It's essentially a side issue now. The Iranians are not moving. It is a political choice."

The cost of failure could be high. Iran's regional foes Israel and Saudi Arabia fear a weak deal that fails to curtail Tehran's nuclear ambitions, while a collapse of the negotiations would encourage Iran to become a threshold nuclear weapon state, something Israel has said it would never allow.

As it appeared likely that no agreement was in the offing, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: "No deal is better than a bad deal."

(Additional reporting by [Parisa Hafezi](#), [Jonathan Allen](#), [John Irish](#), [Vladimir Soldatkin](#), [Patricia Zengerle](#) and [Will Dunham](#); Editing by [Giles Elgood](#) and [David Stamp](#))

24 November 2014 Last updated at 15:26

## **Iran nuclear talks deadline extended to end of June**



Monday's talks were the final day of a lengthy session in Vienna

The deadline for an Iran nuclear deal has been extended to the end of June after talks in Vienna failed to reach a comprehensive agreement.

UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said good progress had been made, but it was "not possible to get an agreement by the [original] deadline".

Six world powers want Iran to curb its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of sanctions.

Tehran says it is not seeking nuclear weapons, but wants atomic energy.

The six countries - the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany - have been in negotiations with Iran to finalise a preliminary deal reached last year in Geneva.

Speaking after the Vienna talks had ended, Mr Hammond said that negotiations would resume in December, and would be extended until 30 June 2015.

Iran would be allowed to continue accessing \$700m (£450m) per month in frozen assets during that period.

Diplomats expect to reach a political agreement by 1 March, with the full technical details of the agreement confirmed by 1 July.

'Maintaining momentum'

Speaking to the BBC, Mr Hammond said that the failure to agree a deal was "a disappointment, but rather than continue blindly we have to recognise the reality that we're not going to make a deal tonight".

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Benjamin Netanyahu: "Don't give these violent medievalists atomic bombs"

He said he was aware that hardliners opposed to any deal were vocal both in Iran and the US, which was why talks would continue again in December.

"We are all clear that enough progress has been made that maintaining the current momentum, and keeping working at it, does give us the prospect of getting to a deal," he added.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is to give a national address at 18:00 GMT, Iranian news agencies reported.

The key sticking points in the negotiations were thought to have been the future size of Iran's uranium enrichment programme, and the timing of sanctions relief.

Highly enriched uranium can be used to make a nuclear bomb, but uranium enriched to lower levels can be used for energy purposes.

Under the terms of international treaties, countries have the right to develop nuclear energy, which Iran insists is its only aim.

However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) says it has been unable to confirm Tehran's assertions that its nuclear activities are exclusively for peaceful purposes.

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Sticking points

**Uranium enrichment:** Western states want to reduce Iran's capacity in order to prevent it acquiring weapons-grade material but Tehran is set on expanding it nearly 20-fold in the coming years

**Sanctions reduction:** Iran wants sanctions lifted immediately but Western states want to stagger their removal to ensure Tehran abides by its commitments

**Bomb technology:** Iran has failed to explain explosives tests and other activity that could be linked to a nuclear weapons programme and has denied international nuclear inspectors access to its Parchin military site

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The United Nations Security Council has adopted six resolutions since 2006 requiring Iran to stop enriching uranium, with sanctions to persuade Iran to comply.

The US and EU have imposed additional sanctions on Iranian oil exports and banks since 2012, hitting Iran's oil revenue badly.



Iranian students rallied in support of the country's nuclear programme on Sunday, in a rare protest approved by the authorities

US President Barack Obama acknowledged on Sunday that "significant" gaps between the two sides remained, and that President Hassan Rouhani had "to deal with his politics at home".

"He's not the ultimate decider inside of Iran, the Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei] is," Mr Obama told US broadcaster ABC.

Both Saudi Arabia and Israel are also vehemently opposed to Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal visited Vienna at the weekend for talks with US Secretary of State Mr Kerry, though his country is not formally involved in the discussions.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose country has not ruled out bombing Iran's nuclear facilities, told the BBC that "no deal is better than a bad deal".

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Talks timetable

**24 Nov 2013:** Six-month interim deal agreed; aim to reach final deal by 20 July 2014

**19 Jul 2014:** Interim deal extended until 24 Nov

**24 Nov:** Agree to meet again in December and extend deadline for "political agreement" to 1 March 2015 and final deal by end June 2015

23 November 2014 Last updated at 19:56

## Iran nuclear talks: Diplomats push for Vienna deal



Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State John Kerry are among those at the talks

Foreign ministers from world powers have been involved in intensive talks to try to reach a nuclear deal with Iran before Monday's deadline.

With no sign of progress at the talks in Vienna, Austria, the US says an option is extending the deadline.

The six nations - US, UK, Russia, China, Germany and France - want Iran to curb its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of UN sanctions.

Iran says it is not seeking nuclear weapons, but wants atomic energy.

It says its nuclear programme is solely designed to provide peaceful, civilian projects.

Representatives of the so-called P5+1 group - five permanent UN Security Council members Britain, China, France, Russia, the US plus Germany - are taking part in the negotiations with Iran.

There have been few solid indications of progress so far, but Iranian sources [told BBC Persian's Kasra Najj](#) on Sunday that a "political agreement" could be reached before the deadline.

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Analysis: Jeremy Bowen, BBC Middle East Editor, Vienna

The price of failure is potentially serious. These talks are the culmination of a lot of work since a temporary agreement in Geneva a year ago. That deal stopped what appeared to be an inexorable slide to war. Israel was threatening to attack Iran's nuclear facilities.

Success would do much to lift Iran's isolation - which would change the strategic balance in the Middle East. That intrigues some Western diplomats. It horrifies Saudi Arabia and Israel.

A year ago all sides in the talks saw an opportunity to deal with an issue that could potentially cause another catastrophic war. That will make them very reluctant to leave Vienna empty-handed - even if that means they will have to do more work on the details next year.

Time is limited though. Hardliners in Tehran and Washington DC will try to sabotage any agreement. Both see no reason to dilute their mutual suspicion.

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With time running out, diplomats have not managed to come close to a broad and comprehensive agreement. Instead they are agreeing on a document which at best might mention parameters of a future agreement, he says.

Earlier, an Iranian news agency quoted an unnamed member of the Iranian delegation as saying a full deal was "impossible" by Monday.

Significant differences reportedly remain over the scope of Iran's uranium enrichment programme and the timing of sanctions relief.

On Sunday evening, a senior US state department official told reporters that the possibility of an extension to the negotiations was being discussed.

"Our focus remains on taking steps forward toward an agreement, but it is only natural that just over 24 hours from the deadline we are discussing a range of options," the official said.

#### Saudi concerns

US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif have held several rounds of talks in recent days in an attempt to break the deadlock.

Talks are expected to continue late on Sunday and into Monday, with Mr Kerry joining European allies for a working dinner following a meeting with the Saudi foreign minister.

Saudi Arabia is not a party of the P5+1 talks, but is concerned about Iran's influence in the region.

Iranian sources told the BBC that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was also due to arrive in Vienna on Sunday.

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#### Potential deal-breakers



**Uranium enrichment:** Western states want to reduce Iran's capacity in order to prevent it acquiring weapons-grade material but Tehran is set on expanding it nearly 20-fold in the coming years

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#### Rare protest

As the final rounds of talks got under way, the [New York Times reported](#) that a key US concern was to prevent Iran from producing a bomb at undetected nuclear locations - referred to as a "sneakout".

Meanwhile, in Tehran, officials approved a rare protest by hardliners who criticised government negotiators.

The demonstrators accused President Hassan Rouhani of giving in to Western pressure.



Students in Tehran held a protest in support for Iran's nuclear programme  
The P5+1 group and Iran agreed an interim deal, known as the Geneva Accord, last year.

Under the agreement, Iran curbed some of its uranium enrichment in return for sanctions relief.

However, the two sides failed to reach a lasting deal by July, as initially agreed, and extended the deadline until 24 November.

Iran has been resisting efforts to scale back its nuclear programme for nearly a decade.

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#### Nuclear talks timeline

- January 2012: IAEA confirms Iran is enriching uranium to levels of up to 20%, an important step towards making it weapons-grade
- June 2013: Reformist-backed cleric Hassan Rouhani wins presidential election, raising hopes for deadlocked nuclear talks
- November 2013: Iran and world powers reach interim deal to curb programme; deadline for final agreement set for July 2014
- January 2014: Some Western sanctions eased as Iran uranium enrichment remains at

- 5%
- July 2014: Deadline extended until November 2014

22 November 2014 Last updated at 19:10

## Iran nuclear talks: 'Big gaps' remain as deadline looms



Iran says the sole purpose of its nuclear programme is civilian energy projects

Key sticking points remain as negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme enter their final stages in Vienna, Western negotiators have said.

Both Germany and the US said the sides were working to close "big gaps" ahead of Monday's deadline for a final deal.

US Secretary of State John Kerry is to hold fresh talks on Saturday with his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif.

Six world powers want Iran to curb its nuclear programme in return for the lifting of United Nations sanctions.

The US, the UK, France, Germany, Russia and China - the so-called P5+1 group - are seeking reassurance that Iran is not trying to build nuclear weapons.

Iran insists its nuclear programme is purely energy-related.

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Potential deal-breakers



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'No new ideas'

On Saturday Mr Kerry said: "We're working hard. We hope we're making careful progress, but we have big gaps (...) which we're working to close."

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier called the negotiations so far "constructive", but added: "That must not mask the fact that there is still a big gap between us in many aspects."

One European source told the AFP news agency that it was now "physically impossible" to reach a full deal in the remaining timeframe. Another anonymous official told Reuters: "Our feeling is that [Iran's negotiators] don't have a lot of flexibility."

However, an Iranian source told the BBC that they remained confident a complete deal was still possible, suggesting the deadline could be extended by a couple of days.

The P5+1 group and Iran reached an interim agreement a year ago. But the two sides failed to reach a lasting deal by July, as initially agreed, and extended the deadline until 24 November.

After meeting Mr Kerry on Friday evening, Mr Zarif said he heard "no new ideas" and had received "no remarkable proposals to take to Tehran".

Iran has been resisting efforts to scale back its nuclear programme for nearly a decade.

Separately, the international nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is calling on Iran to address its concerns about suspicious military activities that could be linked to a nuclear weapons programme.

On Friday, a senior Iranian official told the BBC the team was expecting to reach an outline of a deal by the deadline and then spend the following seven-to-10 days working on the implementation of it at expert level.



Former EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton (left) is taking part in the talks alongside foreign ministers

#### Nuclear talks timeline

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#### [Interim nuclear deal: Key points](#)

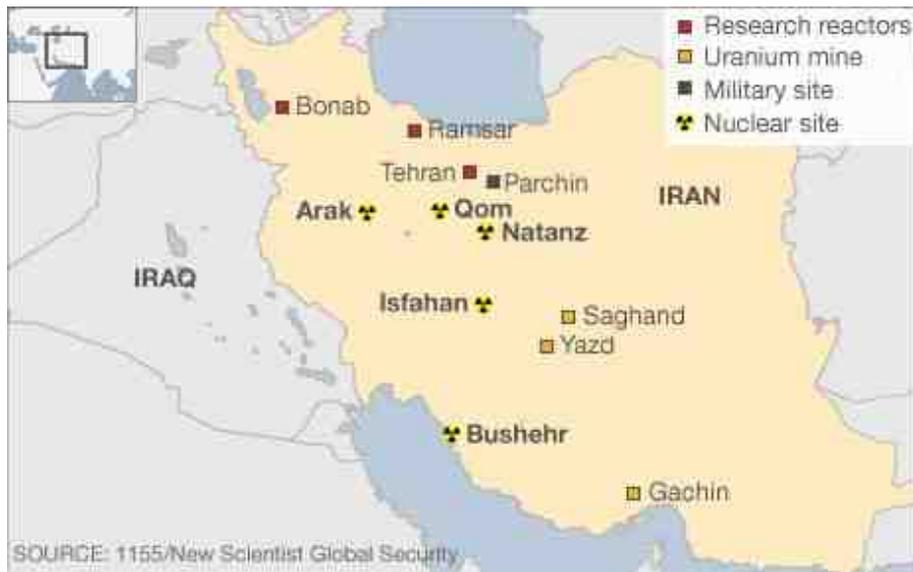
UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond called on Iran to show "flexibility". At the same time, he warned: "We have a long way to go if we are to get to a deal before the deadline."

However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that "all the elements are already on the table" as long as there was "political will".

The deal being sought by the world powers is not directly linked to the IAEA's investigation of Iran.

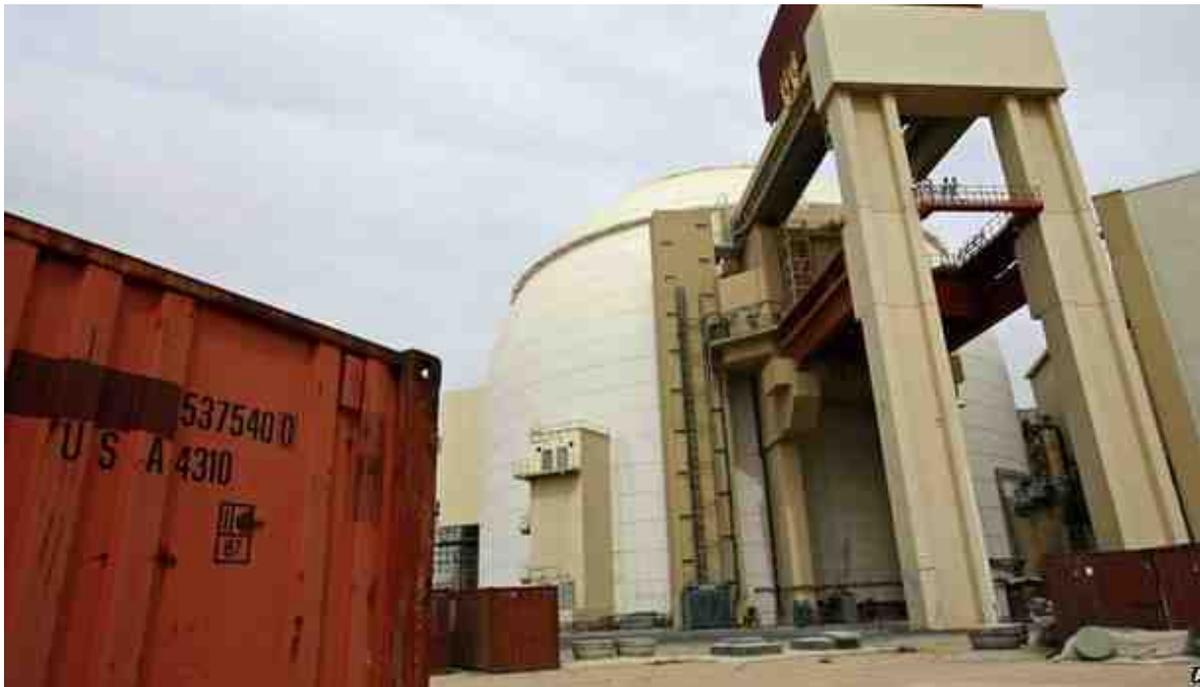
However, the US has said in the past that Iran must address the watchdog's concerns if it expects a comprehensive agreement in the talks.

IAEA chief Yukiya Amano said Iran had not "provided any explanations that enable the agency to clarify the outstanding practical measures".



12 November 2014 Last updated at 01:22

## Russia to build Iran atomic reactors at Bushehr



The existing nuclear reactor at Iran's Bushehr plant already uses some Russian fuel

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Russia has agreed to build up to eight nuclear reactors in Iran, 12 days before a deadline for a

deal to curb Iran's nuclear activity.

The deal agreed by Russia and Iran envisages the construction of two reactors, with scope for a further six.

World powers including Russia have been pressurising Iran to curb its activity amid fears it wants to build a bomb.

Diplomats are due to meet for a final round of talks next week. It is unclear what effect the Russian deal will have.

Six world powers - the US, the UK, France, Germany, Russia and China - are seeking to persuade Iran to reduce its uranium enrichment to a level below that required to build a weapon.

They have offered to lift sanctions in exchange.

It is thought that Iran would want help with its civilian nuclear programme in return for submitting itself to more invasive inspections.



Negotiators John Kerry, Catherine Ashton and Mohammad Javad Zarif last met in Vienna on 15 October

Russian news reports quoted Iran's nuclear chief, Ali Akbar Salehi, as saying that the agreement on building the new reactors was "a turning point in the development of relations between our countries".

Two of the reactors will be built at the nuclear facility at Bushehr.

Rosatom, the Russian state nuclear power company, said the construction would be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a global watchdog, and will meet safeguards against weapons proliferation.

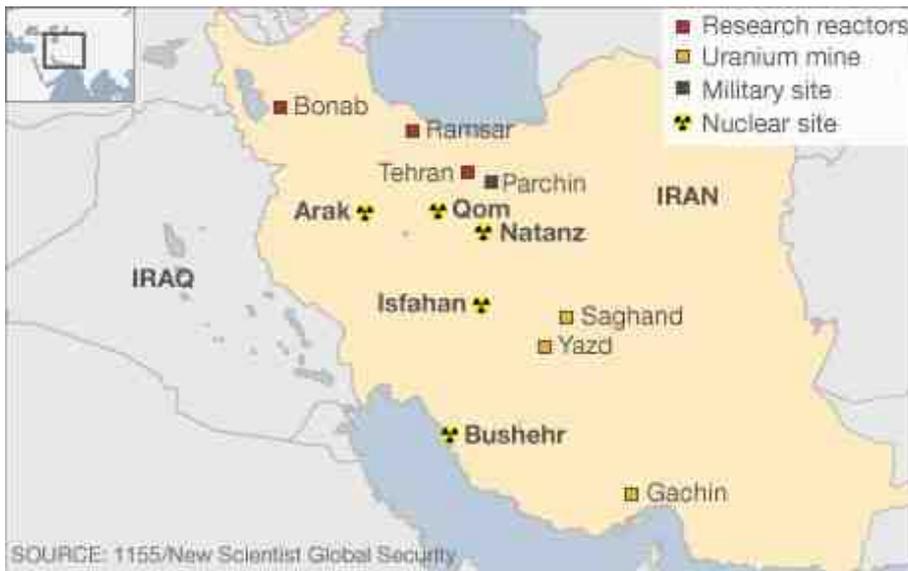
The deal leaves room for a further two reactors to be built at Bushehr and another four at a

separate location.

According to the Associated Press news agency, Russia will supply nuclear fuel for the reactor and retrieve it after it has been used - a mechanism designed to stop Iran from using the fuel to build weapons.

A similar system is already in place for the existing reactor at Bushehr.

Iran has dismissed Western suspicions that its nuclear programme is a cover for making a weapon, insisting that its uranium enrichment activity has a civilian purpose, intended for its energy and medical sectors.



## Lacking breakthrough, sides weigh next moves in Iran nuclear drama

By [Warren Strobel](#)

MUSCAT/BEIJING Tue Nov 11, 2014 3:14am EST



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (L), EU envoy Catherine Ashton (C) and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif meet in Muscat November 10, 2014.

Credit: Reuters/Nicholas Kamm/Pool

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(Reuters) - The United States, Iran and Europe were weighing their next moves on Tuesday after two days of nuclear talks failed to produce any apparent breakthrough ahead of a Nov. 24 deadline.

Iran's top negotiator, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, described the talks in Oman as "two days of very hard work", the official IRNA news agency reported.

"We are still not in a position to claim that progress is achieved, although I cannot say that it was no good, either," he added. "Every dimension of the negotiations, over any particular topic, has many side issues and technical, legal and political complications."

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and EU envoy Catherine Ashton had held "tough, direct and serious" negotiations. She gave no details.

A senior State Department official traveling with Kerry said: "There's more work to do, clearly."

Senior officials of the major powers and Iran started a one-day round of talks in Muscat on Tuesday to discuss the outcome of the trilateral meeting between Zarif, Kerry and Ashton.

"There is a capacity to reach a deal by November 24 if there is a political will. At least we can reach a general agreement on major issues," Araqchi told Iranian state TV.

After leaving Oman, Kerry arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for an Asia-Pacific conference where, officials said, he and U.S. President Barack Obama would confer on next diplomatic steps.

An agreement to curb Iran's nuclear program, which Washington and its allies say may be aimed at building a weapon, would provide a historic foreign policy success for Obama. Iran, which says its nuclear work is for peaceful purposes, would see the removal of punishing economic sanctions.

But, as well as a tight deadline, the complex negotiations face political opposition in the United States, Iran and Israel.

En route to Beijing, Kerry spoke by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a second senior official said.

On Monday, Netanyahu denounced reported remarks by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, calling for Israel's destruction, and said he had sent a letter to the foreign ministers of the P5+1 countries - the five U.N. Security Council permanent members plus Germany.

U.S. Republicans, who won control of the Senate in elections last week, are also hawkish on Iran and have threatened it with new sanctions. The Iranians raised the subject of the U.S. elections in Oman, officials said, but did not dwell on it.

(Additional reporting by [Parisa Hafezi](#) and Fatma Al-Arimi, Editing by William Maclean and [Gareth Jones](#))

# Iran, West hold unscheduled second day of nuclear talks

By [Warren Strobel](#)

DUBAI Mon Nov 10, 2014 4:58am EST



(L-R) Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif, EU envoy Catherine Ashton, Omani Foreign Minister Yusef bin Alawi and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry pose for a photo in Muscat November 9, 2014.

Credit: Reuters/Nicholas Kamm/Pool

(Reuters) - Iran, the United States and the European Union began an unscheduled second day of talks on Monday over disagreements blocking the resolution of a confrontation over Tehran's nuclear programme, U.S. and Iranian officials said.

With two weeks to a deadline for an overall agreement, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and EU envoy Catherine Ashton met in

Oman's capital Muscat to tackle a decade-long dispute which has raised the risk of wider conflict in the Middle East.

The discussions aim to put verifiable limits on Iran's uranium enrichment work - and any other potential path to a nuclear weapon - in return for a gradual lifting of sanctions.

U.S. President Barack Obama told CBS television there was still a big gap between Iran and Western powers and said a deal could be out of reach.

Economic sanctions led by the United States have pushed Iran to the table for an agreement on its nuclear programme, Obama said in an interview broadcast on Sunday.

A final step would involve Iran providing "verifiable, lock-tight assurances that they can't develop a nuclear weapon", Obama said, adding: "There's still a big gap. We may not be able to get there."

Western countries suspect Iran has secretly attempted to acquire the means to build nuclear weapons.

Iran says it wants peaceful nuclear energy only, but has refused to curb enrichment capacity and has been hit by damaging U.S., EU and U.N. Security Council sanctions as a result.

In the CBS interview, Obama declined to comment on a report that he had sent a letter to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, about combating the Islamic State militant group.

Obama said the United States and Iran shared a common enemy in Islamic State, but he reiterated the nuclear talks were not connected to the fight against Islamic State, also known as ISIL. "We're not coordinating with Iran on ISIL," he told CBS.

## REACHING OUT

An editorial on Khamenei's website on Sunday made an indirect reference to a letter from Obama, suggesting it was evidence of an unproductive U.S. policy.

It said Obama had written three letters in total to Khamenei -- in 2009, in 2012 and "about a month ago", adding: "In fact, the U.S. has always reached out to Iran when faced with an impasse, and Obama's latest letter is a direct link to foreign policy dead-ends, especially those involving Iran somehow."

The new U.S. Senate, in which opposition Republicans will have a majority following midterm elections last Tuesday, is likely to be sceptical of any Obama deal with Iran.

The toughest outstanding issues are the size of Iran's enrichment programme, the length of any long-term accord and the pace at which sanctions would be phased out, say Western and Iranian diplomats involved in the negotiations.

Washington also wants intensive verification and monitoring measures to ensure Iran is fulfilling its end of the bargain.

(Reporting by Warren Strobel, [Parisa Hafezi](#) and Fatma Al-Arimi, Editing by William Maclean and [Gareth Jones](#))

7 November 2014 Last updated at 18:47

## Iran failing to answer nuclear questions, says IAEA



Hopes of a deal with Iran were boosted after Hassan Rouhani was elected but a deal is yet to be reached

Iran is failing to answer questions about its nuclear programme just weeks before a deadline for a deal with world powers, the global nuclear agency says.

The IAEA says Iran is complying with an agreement to curb uranium enrichment.

But a confidential IAEA report seen by the BBC says it has made no progress in its investigation into possible military dimensions of the programme.

US Secretary of State John Kerry is due to meet his Iranian counterpart in Oman for further talks at the weekend.

The meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and former EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton comes ahead of the 24 November deadline to strike a landmark nuclear deal.

The BBC's Bethany Bell in Vienna says the IAEA's latest report could complicate efforts by US, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China to reach an agreement with Iran.



John Kerry is meeting his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif in Oman this weekend for more talks

They now have less than three weeks to try and end a decade-long standoff about Tehran's controversial nuclear activities, our correspondent adds.

The US, EU and other powers suspect Iran is secretly seeking to develop nuclear weapons. Iran has strongly denied the charge, insisting its programme is purely for peaceful purposes.

Iran had promised to further co-operate with the IAEA following the election of President Hassan Rouhani last year in a bid to ease Western sanctions.

'No explanations'

The IAEA conducts regular inspections of Iran's nuclear facilities but it also wants the country's government to address allegations of suspected covert activity.

In May, Iran agreed to provide information on two out of around a dozen areas of suspicion by August, but the IAEA says it is yet to receive answers.

"Iran has not provided any explanations that enable the agency to clarify the outstanding practical measures," the report says.

Although the deal being sought by world powers is separate to the IAEA's investigation, a US official said the allegations "must be addressed" as part of any comprehensive agreement.

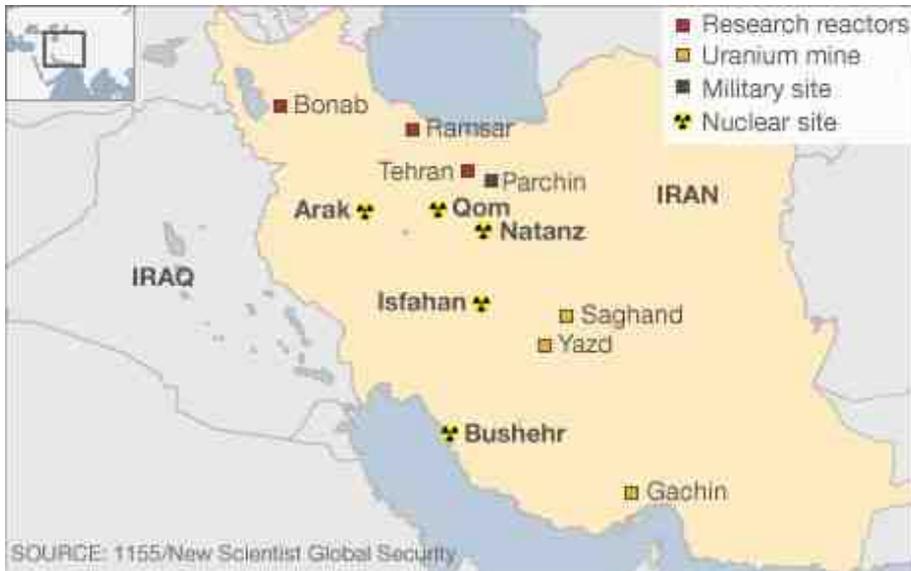
"Only when this happens will it be possible to have confidence that Iran's nuclear programme is and will remain exclusively peaceful," Laura Kennedy, the US envoy to the IAEA, said in September.

On Thursday, it emerged that US President Barack Obama had written a secret letter to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Mr Obama allegedly used the letter, reported by [the Wall Street Journal](#), to speak of a shared interest in fighting Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria and also to urge Iran to agree to a

nuclear deal with the West.

It is understood to be at least the fourth time Mr Obama has written to the Iranian leader since taking office in 2009.



# Exclusive: Iran offers 'compromises' in nuclear talks, West unmoved

BY [PARISA HAFEZI](#) AND [LOUIS CHARBONNEAU](#)

ANKARA/NEW YORK Tue Oct 21, 2014 1:15am EDT



(L-R) U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, European Union Foreign Policy Chief Catherine Ashton, and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif are photographed as they participate in a trilateral meeting in Vienna October 15, 2014.

CREDIT: REUTERS/CAROLYN KASTER/POOL

(Reuters) - Iran is pushing what it portrays as a new compromise proposal in nuclear talks, but Western negotiators say it offers no viable concessions, underscoring how far apart the two sides are as they enter crunch time before a Nov. 24 deadline.

In the negotiations with six major powers, the Iranians say they are no longer demanding a total end to economic sanctions in return for curbing their nuclear program and would accept initially lifting just the latest, most damaging, sanctions.

Western officials dismiss the proposal as nothing new and say the

Iranians have always known that the sanctions could only end gradually - with each measure being suspended and later terminated only after Iranian compliance had been proven.

The officials say that in talks in Vienna they too have offered what they call compromises over demands that Iran limit its nuclear program, but they have been rejected by Tehran.

"The bottom line is that they do not appear willing to limit their enrichment program to a level we would find acceptable," a European diplomat said. "We may have no choice but to extend the talks past November ... It's either that or let the talks collapse."

Under their most recent offer, Iranian officials have told Reuters that Iran's leadership would be satisfied with removing crippling U.S. and European Union energy and banking sanctions imposed in 2012.

They described this as a major stepdown from Iran's consistent calls for the removal of all sanctions imposed on the Islamic Republic because of its refusal to heed U.N. Security Council demands that it halt uranium enrichment work.

Tehran calls the sanctions unfair and illegal.

## COMPROMISE OR NO COMPROMISE?

The proposal by Iranian negotiators in talks with the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China has the backing of the

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iranian officials say.

"For the other party involved, it might be only a political issue, but for Iran what is in danger is the existence of the establishment if the economic hardship continues," a senior Iranian official said.

Building on a U.N. Security Council sanctions resolution passed in 2010, the United States and EU in 2012 imposed major sanctions against Iranian oil and gas companies and strengthened restrictions on the country's central bank.

Under the U.S. National Defense Authorization Act Section 1245, Washington also forced Iran's major oil customers to greatly reduce their purchases of Iranian oil or face having their banks cut off from the U.S. financial system.

The result has been a sharp drop in Iranian oil revenues, soaring inflation and unemployment and a weak Iranian currency.

"Iran wants to return to the situation before these sanctions were imposed," the Iranian official said. "If agreed, it will help in reaching a compromise by the Nov. 24 deadline."

U.S. officials have made clear they would make swift moves to suspend sanctions if a proper deal with Iran is secured and Tehran complies with it.

"If we get a comprehensive agreement and if Iran complies ... Iran will begin to end its isolation from the world community, because the sanctions in the first instance will be suspended and ultimately lifted," a senior U.S. official said last month. "It will take some time,

but they will be lifted."

## REDUCING THE CENTRIFUGES

A series of meetings in Vienna last week between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton failed to break the impasse. Tehran and Washington said they made some progress but much work remained. It is unclear when the next round of talks will start.

One sticking point is the number of centrifuges Iran would be allowed to keep under a deal.

Iranian officials say they would be willing to live with fewer centrifuges provided they were more advanced machines that enrich more uranium at a faster pace. Their goal is to ensure that the volume of uranium they enrich is not reduced as a result of any long-term accord with the six powers.

Western officials say this is not a real compromise.

The United States, France, Britain and Germany would like the number of centrifuges Iran maintains to be in the low thousands, while Tehran wants to keep tens of thousands in operation. It now has about 19,000 installed, of which about 10,000 are spinning to refine uranium.

(Additional reporting by [Arshad Mohammed](#) in Washington;  
Editing by [David Storey](#) and [Ross Colvin](#))

# Iran's president says nuclear deal with West 'certain'

DUBAI Mon Oct 13, 2014 6:12pm EDT



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani smiles while replying to a question during a news conference on the sidelines of the 69th United Nations General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters in New York September 26, 2014.

(Reuters) - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday a nuclear deal with the West was bound to happen and he believed it

could be achieved by a November 24 deadline.

"We have reached consensus on generalities and there are only the fine details to be worked out: whether we would reach an agreement within the next 40 days, if the time will be extended, etc.," the president told his people in a late evening address broadcast live on television.

"Of course details are important too, but what's important is that the nuclear issue is irreversible. I think a final settlement can be achieved in these remaining 40 days. We will not return to the situation a year ago. The world is tired and wants it to end, resolved through negotiations," he said.

"A nuclear settlement is certain," he said, vowing to "apply all our efforts in that direction."

Rouhani, a moderate elected by a landslide 14 months ago partly on promises to end hostilities with the West, cautioned nevertheless that "a 12-year-old dilemma cannot be resolved overnight."

Top diplomats of the United States, Iran and the European Union will meet for another round of talks in Vienna later this week to push for an elusive deal ahead of a Nov. 24 deadline.

The United States, France, Germany, China, Russia and Britain, grouped under the P5+1, have already held a series of meetings with Iran to try for a deal that would curb the Islamic republic's suspected nuclear activities in return for a gradual lifting of economic sanctions against Tehran.

The West hopes resolving the nuclear standoff will ease tension and avert a full-scale conflict in the troubled Middle East - with repeated Israeli threats of force to stop its arch-enemy Iran from gaining nuclear weapon technology.

Tehran has denied any such ambitions, insisting that its uranium enrichment program is designed to generate electricity and for scientific research.

A U.S. official said last week a deal was likely by the present deadline, but Western diplomats say the two sides remain divided on such key issues as the future scope of Iran's uranium enrichment, which at high purity could be used to make bombs.

(Reporting by Mehrdad Balali; Editing by [Howard Goller](#))

9 November 2011 Last updated at 00:15

## UN nuclear agency IAEA: Iran 'studying nuclear weapons'



Russia helped Iran build its Bushehr nuclear power plant

**The UN's nuclear watchdog says it has information indicating Iran has carried out tests "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device".**

In its latest report on Iran, the IAEA says the research includes computer

models that could only be used to develop a nuclear bomb trigger.

Correspondents say this is the International Atomic Energy Agency's toughest report on Iran to date.

Tehran condemned the findings as politically motivated.

"This report is unbalanced, unprofessional and prepared with political motivation and under political pressure by mostly the United States," said Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's envoy to the IAEA.

It was "a repetition of old claims which were proven baseless by Iran in a precise 117-page response, " he added.

Iran says its nuclear programme is solely to generate civilian power.

The BBC's Bethany Bell, in Vienna, has examined the IAEA's latest quarterly report on Iran's nuclear programme.

She says the report gives detailed information - some of it new - suggesting that Iran conducted computer modelling of a kind that would only be relevant to a nuclear weapon.

The report, [published on the Institute for Science and International Security website](#), notes that some of this research, conducted in 2008-09, is of "particular concern", our correspondent says.

### [Continue reading the main story](#) **Analysis**



#### **James Reynolds**

BBC Iran correspondent

The 25-page IAEA report is written in technical, deliberately undramatic language. But some of its findings are clear.

The report says that Iran has carried out activities "relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device".

But on first reading, the report does not state that Iran is actually building a nuclear weapon.

The report lists in detail what it believes Iran has been doing in secret. These activities include conducting computer modelling, developing a detonator, and testing high explosives.

The IAEA suggests that some of Iran's activities are only applicable to nuclear weapons research - in other words, there is no innocent explanation for what Iran is doing.

The agency stresses that the evidence it presents in its report is credible and well-sourced.

Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has dismissed the IAEA as puppet of the United States. His government has already declared that its findings are baseless and inauthentic.

"The application of such studies to anything other than a nuclear explosive is unclear to the agency," the report says.

### **'Credible evidence'**

The report highlights:

Work on fast-acting detonators that have "possible application in a nuclear explosive device, and... limited civilian and conventional military applications".

Tests of the detonators consistent with simulating the explosion of a nuclear device

"The acquisition of nuclear weapons development information and documentation from a clandestine nuclear supply network."

"Work on the development of an indigenous design of a nuclear weapon including the testing of components."

The report continues: "The information indicates that prior to the end of 2003 the above activities took place under a structured programme. There are also indications that some activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device continued after 2003, and that some may still be ongoing."

The report stops short, our correspondent adds, of saying explicitly that Iran

is developing a nuclear bomb.

It says the information is "credible", and comes from some of the IAEA's 35 member states, from its own research and from Iran itself.

The report urges Iran "to engage substantively with the agency without delay for the purpose of providing clarifications."

### **'No serious proof'**

Ahead of the report's release, there had been speculation in Israeli media about potential strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities.

A senior US official said Washington would look at applying more pressure on Iran if it did not supply answers to the questions raised in the report, Reuters news agency said.

### **Continue reading the main story**

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### **Start Quote**

**The White House could hardly sound less bellicose... The last thing Barack Obama wants is an attack”**

Mark Mardell

BBC Washington correspondent

**[Read Mark's thoughts in full](#)**

"That could include additional sanctions by the United States. It could also include steps that we take together with other nations," the unnamed official said.

The UN Security Council has already passed four rounds of sanctions against Iran for refusing to halt uranium enrichment. Highly-enriched uranium can be processed into nuclear weapons.

China and Russia are unlikely to support further sanctions against Iran, the BBC's Kim Ghattas says in Washington.

Russia said the IAEA report had caused rising tension and more time was needed to determine whether it contained new, reliable evidence of a military

element to Iran's nuclear programme.

Experts say Iran is at least one year away, perhaps several, from being able to produce a nuclear bomb. Some believe Iran's leadership wants to be in a position to able to produce such a weapon on short notice.

## Tehran's uranium programme

Plan that would disconnect enriching machines from feeds of uranium being discussed at talks between Iran and six major powers

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Associated Press in New York

[theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com), Saturday 20 September 2014 19.43 BST

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One of the main sticking points has been how much Iran will have to cut back its uranium enrichment. Photograph: Andrew Gombert/Epa

With Iran refusing US demands that it gut its uranium enrichment programme, the two sides are discussing a new proposal that would leave much of Tehran's enriching machines in place but disconnected from feeds of uranium, diplomats told the Associated Press Saturday.

The talks have been stalled for months over Iran's opposition to sharply reducing the size and output of centrifuges that can enrich uranium to levels needed for reactor fuel or weapons-grade material used in the core of nuclear warheads. Iran says its enrichment programme is only for peaceful purposes, but Washington fears it could be used to make a bomb.

Time is running out before a 24 November deadline and both sides are eager to break the impasse.

Ahead of the resumption of talks, on Friday, the New York Times reported that Washington was considering putting a new plan on the table that would focus on removing the piping connecting the centrifuges that enrich uranium, instead of demanding that Iran cut the number of centrifuge machines from 19,000 to no more than 1,500.

Two diplomats told the AP Tehran was initially non-committal at a bilateral meeting in August. But they say the proposal has now moved to being discussed at the talks Tehran is holding with the US and five other powers, and that the Islamic Republic is cautiously receptive.

Both diplomats demanded anonymity because their information is confidential.

While only a proposal, the plan would allow the Iranians to claim that they did not compromise on vows that they would never emasculate their enrichment capabilities, while keeping intact American demands that the programme be downgraded to a point where it could not be quickly turned to making bombs.

The talks bring Iran to the negotiating table with the US, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly. That means US secretary of state John Kerry and his counterparts will likely join in, adding their diplomatic muscle to the meeting.

Ahead of the talks, chief US negotiator Wendy Sherman acknowledged that the sides “remain far apart” on the size and scope of Iran’s uranium enrichment capacity.

Iran’s demands that it be allowed to keep its programme at its present size and output are not acceptable and will not give Iran what it wants an end to the nuclear-related sanctions choking its economy, she told reporters.

“We must be confident that any effort by Tehran to break out of its obligations will be so visible and time-consuming that the attempt would have no chance of success,” she said of Washington’s push for deep, long-lasting cuts.

Other contentious issues are what to do with an underground enrichment plant near the village of Fordo and with a reactor under construction near the city of Arak.

The US wants the Fordo facility converted to non-enrichment use because it is heavily fortified against underground attack. And it wants the reactor converted to reduce to a minimum its production of plutonium, an alternate pathway to nuclear arms.

The deadline was extended to 24 November after the sides failed to reach agreement by the end of July.