

IRAN TRACKER

Situation Report Week of December 8, 2014

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Outlook

The Supreme Leader will likely continue to seek an agreement and sanctions relief despite domestic debates over the negotiations, the threat of new sanctions by the incoming US Congress, and revelations of Iranian violations during the interim agreement. He is very unlikely to accept significant compromises on the technological progress of Iran's nuclear program, however. The regime's rhetorical and visible emphasis on expanding its conventional military capabilities and using them beyond its borders is a worrisome new trend.

The Supreme Leader supports continued nuclear negotiations but IRGC leadership claims force, not diplomacy, secures Iran

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei endorsed the November 24th decision to extend negotiations for another seven months in a November 27th speech. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) leadership, however, [denied](#) Foreign Minister [Javad Zarif's claim](#) that negotiations were making Iran more secure. Khamenei appeared to support the IRGC, [urging the Iranian armed forces](#) on November 30th to increase their combat capabilities regardless of political considerations. An unprecedented [major public relations campaign](#) has been

underway for some weeks singling out IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani's role in strengthening Iran's hand against the West as well.

Nuclear-related sanctions may be eroding while negotiations continue

The U.S. complained to the UN Security Council that Iran has increased its secret efforts this year to acquire equipment for its research reactor at the Arak nuclear complex, according to [a new report](#) in Foreign Policy. Such efforts would violate UN sanctions and the interim nuclear agreement, in which Iran promised that it would "not make any further advances of its activities" at Arak, Natanz, and Fordow. The UN panel of experts overseeing the Iranian nuclear issue also [reported its concern](#) that "states might have been more cautious in their approach to exchanging information with the Panel because of the ongoing negotiations" since it has not received any new information on alleged sanctions violations in some months. Iran's reported new emphasis on receiving technology import sanctions relief—as opposed to petroleum and financial sanctions—suggests that Tehran's top priority during the negotiations is to increase the sophistication of its nuclear program.

Iranian military steps up its role in Iraq

Iranian F-4s [conducted airstrikes](#) against IS positions in Iraq, demonstrating Tehran's growing ability and willingness to use conventional military power beyond its borders. The strikes supported a combined Iranian-Iraqi Security Forces-Iraqi Shi'a militia campaign to clear a buffer zone between Baghdad and the Iranian border. Iran's ability to fly the decades-old F-4s in combat suggests a notable improvement of Iran's conventional military capabilities.

Also in the news

Tehran conducted an intense week of global outreach. President Rouhani [spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin](#) about the ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 and the potential for sanctions relief. Russia also pledged its [support to Iran's membership in the World Trade Organization](#). An Iranian parliamentary delegation traveled to Mexico for first time since the 1979 Revolution and [signed a Memorandum of Understanding](#) promoting economic trade, cultural and political ties.

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