

BY GREG THIELMANN

WITH BENJAMIN SEEL

JANUARY 4, 2012

# Diplomatic Engagement: The Path to Avoiding War and Resolving the Nuclear Crisis

U.S.-Iranian relations are bad and getting worse. The latest report of the International Atomic Energy Agency describes in graphic detail the kinds of activities creating concerns about Tehran's nuclear program. While sanctions and other measures have slowed down Iran's movement toward acquiring a nuclear weapons option, Tehran continues to move forward and remains unwilling to provide the transparency required for fully effective IAEA safeguards. But the greatest near-term danger is not an Iranian nuclear weapon; it is the threat of war breaking out because of unintended escalation of a military incident or a premeditated strike by Israel.

At the end of 2011, the U.S. Congress passed new legislation to sanction transactions with the Central Bank of Iran. In response, Iran threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which 35 percent of the world's seaborne oil passes, and underscored its determination with a ten-day military exercise in surrounding waters. Republican presidential candidates meanwhile charged Iran with everything from building nuclear facilities under mosques to declaring its intent to attack the United States with nuclear weapons. And the Obama administration stated repeatedly that "the military option remains on the table."

To prevent war, there is an urgent need to establish lines of bilateral communication at all levels—between military forces in the region, between diplomats, and between senior officials. ACA Senior Fellow Greg Thielmann, with the assistance of ACA Research Intern Benjamin Seel, lays out the nature of the imminent threat and some tried-and-true means of addressing it.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Diplomatic engagement is the only realistic path for ultimately resolving the Iranian nuclear issue.
  - Sanctions can buy time and raise the costs for Iran of its defiant behavior.
  - But winning Tehran's agreement to necessary transparency measures must come through diplomacy.
- In the meantime, enhanced communication is needed at all levels to mitigate the risks of war.
  - Misunderstandings and the lack of communication have often contributed to the outbreak of war in the modern era—from Vietnam to Iraq.
  - U.S.-Iranian diplomatic contacts could provide an invaluable source of information on dangers and opportunities.
  - Military-to-military channels of communication need to be strengthened so that maritime incidents do not escalate out of control.

## The Most Immediate Threat

Shortly before ending his four-year tour of duty as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen addressed the problem of Iran:

We haven't had a connection with Iran since 1979.... We are not talking to Iran, so we don't understand each other. If something happens,...it's virtually assured that we won't get it right—that there will be miscalculation, which would be extremely dangerous in that part of the world.<sup>1</sup>

In this clarion warning about the need for lines of communication with Iran, Mullen made it clear that he was talking not just about the lack of military-to-military communications, but also about the absence of diplomatic dialogue. Regrettably, instead of taking steps to confront head-on the clear and present danger Mullen identified, the United States seems disposed either to ignore it or to revel in it.

As 2011 drew to a close, the troubled relationship between the United States and Iran continued to spiral downward. Already burdened by Tehran's continued defiance of the international community in pursuing a nuclear program outside the bounds of its safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), U.S.-Iranian relations suffered new blows.

The United States charged Iran with plotting to assassinate the Saudi ambassador posted to Washington. Iranian authorities either ordered or failed to prevent the storming and seizure of the British Embassy in Tehran. The United States acknowledged the loss of a surveillance drone deep inside Iran. Iran suffered catastrophic explosions from unknown causes at a missile base near Tehran, as well as in the vicinity of nuclear facilities in Isfahan. The U.S. Congress passed new legislation to sanction transactions with the Central Bank of Iran. The Israeli press reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak were pressing for military action against Iran—action that would inevitably embroil the United States.<sup>2</sup>

That Iranian nuclear weapons would pose both a regional and worldwide threat is widely accepted. But the threat identified by Mullen is much more immediate and not unrelated to the longer-term nuclear threat. The lines of communication are down. Instead of dire circumstances prompting urgent efforts to improve military-to-military communications,



United States Government

The U.S. atmospheric nuclear weapons test "Chama," conducted at Johnston Atoll in the Pacific on October 18, 1962, was one of five such tests occurring during the height of the Cuban missile crisis.

diplomatic engagement, and nongovernmental contacts, the domestic political environment in the United States appears to encourage just the opposite. Iran's isolation is sought and celebrated. The U.S. House of Representatives has even contemplated legislation to criminalize contact with Iranian diplomats.<sup>3</sup>

## Emergency Communications Channel Needed

The United States needs to relearn the lessons from its own harrowing experiences in the Cold War when miscommunications and misunderstandings nearly led to nuclear catastrophe. Establishing emergency lines of military and diplomatic communication can help prevent minor incidents from quickly escalating into major crises.

Throughout the tense 13-day standoff in October 1962 between the United States and the USSR over Soviet nuclear-armed missiles stationed in Cuba, the two countries' leaders were confused and frustrated by rapidly unraveling events. Even activities that were theoretically under the leaders' authority occurred without their knowledge or express permission. U.S. President John F. Kennedy was caught off guard by the first of several U.S. nuclear weapons tests in the atmosphere and by the flight test of a U.S. intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) that occurred in the middle of the crisis. He was initially surprised by the looseness of his control over the actions of naval ship commanders. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev also was startled to realize how much of the authority to fire nuclear weapons had been delegated to Soviet missile officers in the field.

Although a "hotline" was set up between the U.S.

and Soviet leadership as a result of the trauma of the Cuban missile crisis, other close calls continued to occur. In the 1960s and early 1970s, a pattern of confrontational behavior developed between U.S. and Soviet warships and aircraft. Looking back on such encounters, former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt called them “an extremely dangerous, but exhilarating game of chicken.”<sup>4</sup> The maritime confrontations almost led to calamity in May 1967, when the USS *Walker* collided with Soviet vessels on consecutive days. The subsequent escalation in rhetoric, including calls by Representative Gerald Ford (R-Mich.) to allow U.S. ships to open fire on harassing Soviet vessels, brought attention to the need for a way to communicate with the Soviets to prevent or contain such incidents.<sup>5</sup> The 1972 Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) agreement was negotiated to address the problem (see box, p. 4).

Of course the INCSEA agreement and the military-to-military contacts provided through negotiation and implementation of the early nuclear arms control agreements could not forestall all dangerous incidents, either before or after the end of the Cold War. Soviet air defense forces shot down an errant Korean airliner in Soviet Pacific air space in 1983, having confused the passenger plane with a nearby U.S. military surveillance aircraft. All on board were killed, including a U.S. congressman. Six years later, Russian ballistic missile early warning officers mistook the North Atlantic launch of a Norwegian weather rocket for a U.S. Trident sea-launched ballistic missile, causing Russian strategic forces to be put on alert and President Boris Yeltsin to activate his emergency communications system, the “nuclear football.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Rushing to War With One Side of the Story**

Although war between the superpowers was successfully, if narrowly, averted on several occasions in the post-World War II era, lesser wars have been launched, at least partially, on the basis of erroneous information. Vietnam (1964) and Iraq (2003) are particularly conspicuous examples.

The 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which provided the legislative authorization for the introduction of U.S. combat troops into South Vietnam, was quickly passed in response to two alleged attacks on U.S. warships in international waters off the coast of North Vietnam. However, the military actions provoking the legislation were not as they first seemed. The second attack, which was the proximate cause for the

resolution, never actually occurred; initial reports were based on erroneous radar and sonar returns and on misinterpreted communications intercepts. Doubts about the veracity of the reports began surfacing on the same day President Lyndon Johnson addressed Congress. Neither these doubts nor the extenuating circumstances (the covert South Vietnamese raids on North Vietnam, which preceded and provoked the initial attack) were communicated to Congress.

The legislative authorization for the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was based primarily on faulty intelligence analysis, accompanied by a misleading presentation of intelligence by the political leadership. The extensive investigations of the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that “[m]ost of the major key judgments in the Intelligence Community’s October 2002 [National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction] were either overstated, or were not supported by, the underlying intelligence reporting”<sup>7</sup> and that “[s]tatements by the President and the Vice President indicating that Saddam Hussein was prepared to give weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups for attacks against the United States were contradicted by available intelligence information.”<sup>8</sup>

Vietnam and Iraq are cautionary tales about the impact of rapidly moving but ambiguous events, combined with inadequate understanding of the antagonists’ motives, and the opportunities in such situations for the executive branch to withhold critical information from Congress and public.

### **Playing With Fire Near the Oil Fields**

The United States has deep economic and security equities in the Middle East. As was the case with Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, U.S. interests in Iranian behavior are multifaceted, and intelligence on some critical issues is ambiguous. As was the case with Vietnam in 1964, U.S. military forces are heavily involved in the region and operating in close proximity to the forces of a potential adversary.

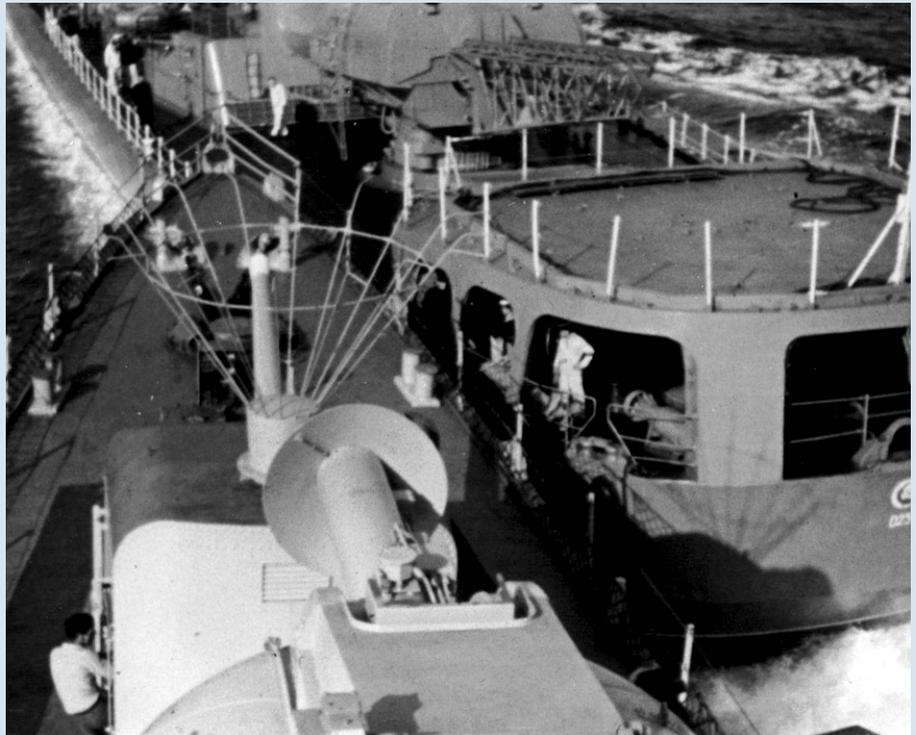
Iran straddles the Persian Gulf, through which 35 percent of the world’s sea-borne petroleum passes. Given the clerical regime’s ideological antipathy to the United States, and the presence of significant U.S. air, land, and naval forces along Iran’s borders, the risks of military confrontations are great. Global energy dependence on the region’s energy resources contributed to third-party involvement during the long Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). Indeed, fighting in that conflict spread directly to others during the “tanker

# U.S.-Soviet Confidence Building in the Cold War: The 1972 INCSEA Agreement

The U.S.-Soviet accord on the “prevention of incidents on and over the high seas,” known as the Incidents at Sea (INCSEA) agreement, established guidelines for acceptable behavior, opened up channels of dialogue, and reaffirmed existing norms and protocols for operating at sea.

In April 1968 the Department of State, at the behest of the Navy, invited the Soviet Union to discuss “safety of the sea” issues with the United States. Several weeks later, a Soviet aircraft crashed while on a tracking mission alongside the aircraft carrier USS *Essex*, further underscoring the need for the two sides to meet on the subject.

U.S. and Soviet officials negotiated the INCSEA agreement over the course of two meetings that took place in Moscow in October 1971 and Washington in May 1972. It built on several existing maritime protocols, including the Rules of the Road and the International Code of Signals. The INCSEA agreement also clearly defined unacceptable and threatening behavior, such as aiming weapons and spotlights at opposing ships. Additionally, “buzzing” by aircraft of the decks of opposing ships and vessels’ intentional interference with exercises and maneuvers now were recognized as negligent actions. Captains were required to give three to five days’ notice before performing exercises that presented a danger to the navigation of other vessels or



The U.S. destroyer *Walker* collides with the Soviet destroyer *Besslednyi* in the Sea of Japan on May 10, 1967.

David Johnston/U.S. Navy

aircraft and to announce the presence of submerged submarines.<sup>1</sup>

After the agreement, much of the perilous behavior that has been commonplace was no longer regarded as acceptable or professional. Equally importantly, the agreement strengthened lines of communication between governments and between ships. Naval attachés in Moscow and Washington were assigned the role of dealing directly with the host country’s navy concerning incidents at sea. Ship captains were required to report all incidents that did occur up their chain of command. Lastly, the agreement established annual meetings to review the

implementation of the pact, enhancing confidence and building trust between the U.S. and Soviet navies in a nonpolitical forum.<sup>2</sup>—**BENJAMIN SEEL**

## ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of State, “Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Prevention of Incidents on and Over the High Seas,” May 25, 1972, <http://www.state.gov/t/isn/4791.htm>.
2. David Griffiths, “Catalyst for Confidence: 25 Years of INCSEA,” NOAC (National Officers Association of Canada), 1998, [http://wDww.noac-national.ca/article/griffiths/incsea\\_bydavidgriffiths.html](http://wDww.noac-national.ca/article/griffiths/incsea_bydavidgriffiths.html).

war," eventually involving direct clashes in 1987 and 1988 between Iran and the United States. U.S. forces ended up destroying or disabling a quarter of Iran's navy, as well as shooting down an Iranian civilian airliner with the loss of all on board.

The concentration of U.S. naval forces in the Persian Gulf and ground troops in Iran's neighbor to the east gives rise to deep concerns about the unintended consequences of future military encounters with Iran. Retired Admiral William Fallon, the former head of U.S. Central Command, and the former Fifth Fleet commander, retired Vice Admiral Kevin Cosgriff, both have publicly expressed concerns similar to those voiced by Mullen.<sup>9</sup> Incidents such as the capture by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy of British sailors off the coast of both Iraq and Iran in March 2007 make clear how easily encounters can explode into international crises. The United States needs to try harder to institutionalize lines of communication with Iran's military forces.

### The Thin, Pin-Striped Line

Deep historical grievances plague both sides of the U.S.-Iranian bilateral relationship. Tehran's political turmoil and repression, sponsorship of terrorism, and refusal to cooperate fully with the IAEA's monitoring of Iran's nuclear program have made productive pursuit of traditional diplomacy with Iran very difficult. On top of serious differences on issues and legitimate concerns about the security implications of a potentially nuclear-armed Iran, the U.S. public is also barraged by fear mongering and demands for regime change from U.S. political leaders and pundits.

Means to discourage Iranian defiance of the IAEA can be easily misconstrued to be means to achieve regime collapse. National security adviser Tom Donilon emphasized in an address at the Brookings Institution on November 22, 2011, that the Obama administration had succeeded in isolating the Iranian government with regard to its refusal to cooperate fully with the IAEA.<sup>10</sup> However, diplomatic isolation is officially intended as a means of convincing Iran to conform to international standards of behavior, not to be an end in itself. The desired end is compromise acceptable to both sides. In pursuit of that goal, Washington should energetically pursue every opportunity to engage Tehran diplomatically on contentious policy issues as well as on issues where there may be a commonality of interests.

The Iranian public, meanwhile, is subjected to



Relatives of victims of the Iranian airliner shot down in error by the U.S. Navy cruiser USS *Vincennes* over the Persian Gulf in 1988 stand under a painting depicting the scene during a 2003 ceremony in the Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas.

anti-American and anti-Israeli hate rhetoric and issue distortion by its own government. U.S. threats of using military force and talk of regime change are used as evidence that Iran's capitulation and dissolution of its current form of government are the real U.S. motives. By emphasizing the maximalist position and eschewing compromise in approaching negotiations, hardliners on both sides leave the impression that there is no way out of the Iranian nuclear crisis short of war. But preventive war is not an option that can satisfy U.S. needs or can be reconciled with its values.

### Worse Than Stalin's USSR or Mao's China?

The challenges of dealing with a country such as contemporary Iran are not novel to the U.S. experience. Threatening international behavior and domestic brutality also were characteristics of the Soviet and Chinese governments when the United States first established diplomatic relations. President Franklin Roosevelt established relations with Joseph Stalin's USSR in 1933, a time when Moscow was hosting and controlling the Comintern, which was openly committed to the overthrow of the international bourgeoisie, including the U.S. system of government. President Richard Nixon traveled to Beijing in 1972 to meet with Chinese leader Mao Zedong in pursuit of rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, against which the United States had fought a major war in Korea two decades earlier. China had already deployed its first nuclear-armed ICBM capable of hitting U.S. allies in the Pacific. By the time diplomatic relations with China finally were established in 1979, China was getting ready to deploy the nuclear-

tipped DF-5 (CSS-4) ICBM, which could threaten the continental United States.

In addition to the security threats the Soviet Union and China posed at the time diplomatic relations were established, each country was engaged in heavy repression of its domestic population. In each case, the host government, which the United States had just

diplomatic initiatives. National technical means of gathering information may be more sophisticated than ever, but they only supplement, not substitute for, the insights gained through human contact and on-the-ground presence.

*Providing the optimal mechanism for negotiating.*

**“[Engagement] may or may not lead to agreement, but it will always lead to better information, and better information will lead to better policy.”**

*—James Dobbins*

recognized diplomatically, held the world record for the slaughter of its own citizens.<sup>11</sup>

It is hard to make the case that the current circumstances in Iran are more dire than in the USSR of 1933 or the China of 1972, or that Iran’s leaders are more vile than Stalin or Mao. At a time when the intelligence minister of Iran meets in Saudi Arabia with a Saudi crown prince (shortly after Iran is alleged to have plotted the assassination of the Saudi ambassador to Washington),<sup>12</sup> it seems strange to regard a meeting between U.S. and Iranian senior officials as unacceptable.

### **Let’s Talk**

It is therefore necessary to re-examine the contribution diplomacy can make, regardless of the characteristics of Iran’s current government. In dealing with a difficult interlocutor such as Tehran, diplomats can provide two vital functions:

*Gaining knowledge about one’s negotiating partner.*

By contributing to knowledge of the personalities involved and the societal and governmental context of the issue positions, diplomats can identify and exploit opportunities that might otherwise be missed. As James Dobbins, the lead U.S. negotiator at the 2001 Bonn conference on Afghanistan, said with regard to Iran at a 2009 Arms Control Association panel discussion, “[Engagement] may or may not lead to agreement, but it will always lead to better information, and better information will lead to better policy.”<sup>13</sup> The Iranian political context is exceedingly complicated. The government often sends mixed signals in offering or responding to

Regular personal interaction is faster, more nimble, and more targeted than relying exclusively on diplomatic correspondence, third party intermediaries, and occasional high-level encounters. Frequent direct contact is more likely to build relationships of trust and avoid misunderstandings. The Bonn Conference on Afghanistan in late 2001 showed that the United States and Iran could work together constructively in common cause, suggesting that diplomatic dysfunction is not built into the DNA of the two sides (see box, p. 7).

The U.S. Foreign Service has been building a cadre of Farsi speakers, now serving in embassies and consulates on the periphery of Iran. In addition to monitoring press and social media, these officers have personal experience with Iranians seeking consular services and help to administer the limited U.S.-Iranian exchange programs that still exist. These officers comprise the building blocks of a staff for a future U.S. embassy in Tehran—much as the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Latvia, during the 1920s (with George Kennan) served as embassy-in-waiting for the future U.S. embassy in Moscow. Yet U.S. diplomats today are currently encumbered by the restrictive contact policies of both governments. In addition, as mentioned above, there is pressure from the U.S. Congress to make things even worse.

U.S.-Iranian interests are currently handled by Swiss diplomats in Tehran. Nuclear negotiations are led by EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton. The professionalism of the Swiss and the competence of those representing the six powers (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United

# Iran: A Constructive Negotiating Partner in Bonn

The last decade witnessed an intensive negotiation between U.S. and Iranian diplomats ending in a successful outcome—at the Bonn conference on Afghanistan in December 2001. The objective of that conference was to establish a plan for a post-Taliban government in Afghanistan that would have the support of the country's various tribal factions and would help to start the country on the path towards stability.

Ambassador James F. Dobbins, the lead U.S. negotiator at the conference, characterized working with the Iranians as "...surprising only in how easy and how successful it was."<sup>1</sup> He has since described in detail how the Iranians contributed to the Bonn meeting's success.

The United States had approached the Bonn conference with modest expectations, and Dobbins was instructed only to "press for a broadly based, representative government." Inclusion of the term "democracy" came after the Iranian delegation suggested a provision calling for a democratic Afghan government that would help combat terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

The biggest obstacle the conference faced, according to Dobbins, was reaching agreement between the various Afghan factions on how to apportion the ministries of the provisional government. The Northern Alliance's demand for control of 18 of 24 ministries nearly brought the conference to its knees in the final hours. After considerable negotiating by the UN, the U.S., and other delegations, it was Iranian representative Javad Zarif's last-minute conversation with the Northern Alliance that convinced it to accept a smaller share of ministers and allowed the conference to reach a mutually agreeable solution.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly thereafter, at the Tokyo donors conference, Iran agreed to contribute \$500 million in assistance

for Afghanistan—an amount similar to the sum committed by the United States. By 2007, Dobbins said, Iran had "largely delivered on that assistance."<sup>4</sup>

The December 2004 inauguration of Hamid Karzai as president of Afghanistan was meant to highlight the new unity of the post-Taliban government. Consequently, complete attendance by the various Afghan warlords was an important signal for the historically fractured state. However, the attendance of an important warlord from Herat was very much in doubt. Dobbins noted that the Iranian foreign minister stopped his plane in Herat on his way to the inauguration and collected the missing warlord, escorting him to the ceremony to underscore his support.<sup>5</sup>

Although much has changed since the Bonn conference, including Iran's president, the same supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is still in charge. Dobbins' anecdotes provide strong evidence that the pursuit of constructive diplomatic engagement with the Iranian regime in areas of common interest is not necessarily chimerical. —  
*GREG THIELMANN with BENJAMIN SEEL*

## ENDNOTES

1. James F. Dobbins, "Iran's Nuclear Challenge: Where to go from here?," Arms Control Association press briefing, October 22, 2009, <http://www.armscontrol.org/events/iransnuclearchallenge>.
2. Phillip Kurata, "Former U.S. Envoy to Afghanistan Reviews Bonn Agreement Success," Washington File, October 6, 2005, <http://news.findlaw.com/wash/s/20051006/20051006144849.html>.
3. James F. Dobbins, "Showdown with Iran," *Frontline*, October 23, 2007, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/showdown/themes/slapface.html>.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*

States) negotiating with Iran on nuclear issues are not in dispute. However, these arrangements are clearly not the optimal way to resolve U.S.-Iranian differences and seek common ground in what should be an intense and multifaceted bilateral relationship.

Under present circumstances, the six powers should take care not to reflexively close off other efforts by third parties such as the Brazilian-Turkish initiative in

the spring of 2010. Brazil and Turkey sought to help rejuvenate the IAEA's October 2009 proposal for Iran to swap a large portion of its stockpile of low-enriched uranium for foreign-fabricated fuel plates to be used in the Tehran Research Reactor, which produces medical isotopes. Although Iran's primary motivation was to forestall an imminent round of additional UN Security Council sanctions, the United States may have been

too dismissive of the effort and blind to the potential benefits of seeking to build on it. Given the extremely low level of trust between Washington and Tehran, the United States should welcome and collaborate on constructive initiatives from friendly parties.

When Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad recently offered to halt 20 percent uranium enrichment in exchange for fuel plates to service the Tehran reactor, the U.S. follow-up appeared slow and disjointed.

When the United States announced prosecutions in the alleged Iranian bomb plot, there was apparently no effort to lodge a confidential diplomatic protest in parallel as would happen in a normal adversarial relationship. By the time an ad hoc channel was arranged in New York to officially convey U.S. charges, the media battle already was well under way.

It has become a hackneyed expression in Washington official circles that “we are keeping all options on the table.” This is usually taken to mean that the United States has not ruled out a preventive attack against Iran’s nuclear facilities. For the sake of U.S. military service personnel in the Persian Gulf and Afghanistan who would be impacted by such an attack, and for the sake of all the Americans and Iranians who would suffer if the current downward spiral continues, it is time to fully exercise all options to enhance communications between the United States and Iran. The high stakes demand no less.

## ENDNOTES

1. Address by Admiral Michael Mullen, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 20, 2011, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/92011\\_transcript\\_Mullen.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/92011_transcript_Mullen.pdf).

2. See, for example: Barak Ravid, Amos Harel, Zvi Zrahiya, and Jonathan Lis, “Netanyahu trying to persuade cabinet to support attack on Iran,” *Haaretz*, December 16, 2011.

3. See Jamal Abdi, “Outlawing diplomacy with Iran comes with dangerous repercussions,” *The Hill*, December 13, 2011, <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/198991-outlawing-diplomacy-with-iran-comes-with-dangerous-repercussions>.

4. David F. Winkler, “When Russia Invaded Disneyland,” *Proceedings*, May 1997, Vol. 123, <http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/1997-05/when-russia-invaded-disneyland>.

5. David F. Winkler, *Cold War at Sea* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2000), p. 55.

6. The Norwegian sounding rocket incident and three other false alarms are discussed in Geoffrey Forden, “False Alarms in the Nuclear Age,” *NOVA*, November 6, 2001, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/military/nuclear-false-alarms.html>.

7. “Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq,” July 9, 2004, p. 14, <http://intelligence.senate.gov/108301.pdf>.

8. “Report on Whether Public Statements Regarding Iraq by U.S. Government Officials Were Substantiated by Intelligence,” Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, June 5, 2008, p. 82, <http://intelligence.senate.gov/080605/phase2a.pdf>.

9. In an October 19, 2011, conversation with the authors, Cosgriff noted that a “formal communications structure” would be useful between the captains on the bridges of U.S. ships and their Iranian counterparts in both the regular Iranian navy and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) maritime forces. He emphasized that there was “no direct, timely link between Washington and Tehran,” nor between the Fifth Fleet commander and his counterparts in Iran. The “cavalier and belligerent” operating characteristics of the IRGC navy made preventing and containing incidents such as the near-conflict with IRGC small boats on January 6, 2008, particularly difficult, he said.

10. Tom Donilon, “Iran and International Pressure: An Assessment of Multilateral Efforts to Impede Iran’s Nuclear Program,” November 22, 2011, [http://www.brookings.edu/events/2011/1122\\_iran\\_nuclear\\_program.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2011/1122_iran_nuclear_program.aspx).

11. See comparisons in <http://necrometrics.com/20c5m.htm>.

12. Farnaz Fassihi, “Iran Tries to Repair Saudi Arabia Split,” *The Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2011, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10010424052970204844504577098801370741014.html>.

13. James F. Dobbins, “Iran’s Nuclear Challenge: Where to go from here?,” Arms Control Association Press Briefing, October 22, 2009, <http://www.armscontrol.org/events/iransnuclearchallenge>.

---

**The Arms Control Association (ACA) is an independent, membership-based organization dedicated to providing authoritative information and practical policy solutions to address the dangers posed by the world’s most dangerous weapons. The “Solving the Iranian Nuclear Puzzle” briefing series is made possible with the support of the Ploughshares Fund and contributions from individual ACA members.**