



P5+1 Has High Hopes for Upcoming Iran Nuclear Talks

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Iran's foreign minister will meet in Geneva next week with officials from the so called P5+1: the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, and Germany. This latest round of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program comes with high expectations following new Iranian President Hassan Rouhani striking conciliatory tones throughout his young administration.

"I assure you that, on the Iranian side, this will be there fully, a hundred percent, that within a very short period of time there will be a settlement on the nuclear issue," said Rouhani, discussing the upcoming talks.

Iran has long maintained that its nuclear program is for peaceful, civilian purposes. The West and Israel, however, believe Tehran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry says Tuesday's talks in Geneva will be helpful in determining Iran's intentions.

"If they do intend to be peaceful, I believe there's a way to get there," said Kerry.

U.S. officials say they are encouraged by the "energy and determination" of the Rouhani administration. Former U.S. ambassador Adam Ereli feels the new Iranian president is politically savvy.

"He read his audience very well. And his audience was clearly the American public and American policy makers. He came across as moderate. He came across as open to compromise. He came across as a breath of fresh air," said Ereli.

The above is especially true when in comparison to former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, according to Cato Institute analyst Doug Bandow.

"Now we may not look at him as a moderate, but compare him to Ahmadinejad and this is a major step forward. So I think the administration can make the case -- give this some time," said Bandow.

However, not all are convinced. Israel thinks Iran is merely playing for time as it continues to attempt to develop a nuclear weapon. Israeli Government spokesman Mark Regev.

"Our concern is, that the Iranian promises, the Iranian words of good faith, are in fact a smokescreen, a cover for the continuation of their aggressive nuclear programs. And what are the facts? Israel will look at what Iran does, not what it says," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for the Israeli government.

Israel has said that it reserves the right to attack Iran to prevent it from developing an atomic weapon. That's an escalation the Obama administration is working hard to avoid, according to Bandow.

"Military strikes really just tell the Iranian government, 'You've got to have nukes. It's the only way to protect yourself.' There's a lot of downsides," explains Bandow.

This dilemma presents just another reason to reach agreement with President Rouhani, claims Adam Ereli, but stresses that any agreement reached must be a comprehensive one.

"If we see hesitation, if we see monkey business, if we see trying to get around the question or around the issue, then we will know it was all style and no substance," said Ereli.

The United States has said economic sanctions against Iran will remain in place until Tehran takes "concrete and verifiable steps" to comply with its international obligations.