

Russia Says U.S. Measures Hinder Progress on Iran Nuclear Issue

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia said Tuesday that new U.S. measures targeting businesses for evading sanctions against Iran would hinder progress on ending the standoff over Iranian nuclear activity following a landmark interim deal between Tehran and six world powers.

Iran has curbed its higher-grade uranium enrichment and won limited relief from sanctions under the Nov. 24 deal that is to run for six months. The two sides are to resume talks on Feb. 18 on a final overall settlement to the decade-old dispute.

But Washington has stressed that the main superstructure of trade sanctions must still be enforced pending a permanent deal and has designated sanctions evaders twice in the last three months to keep up pressure on Tehran for a negotiated solution.

The Islamic Republic says its nuclear program is peaceful, but Western governments have long suspected that it is a front to develop the means to build atomic bombs.

"We clearly reject these kinds of [U.S.] steps," Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said, Interfax reported.

"This is a straight path to the destruction of a healthy and positive basis for further progress on resolving the problem related to the Iranian nuclear program."

Russia, which built Iran's first nuclear power plant and has much better ties with Tehran than the West, has supported four rounds of United Nations Security Council sanctions since 2006 but criticized the U.S. and Europe for additional punitive measures they adopted on their own.

"The unilateral American sanctions are illegitimate," Ryabkov said.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate whose election last June opened the way to the diplomatic breakthrough in November, on Tuesday called continued Western economic sanctions "brutal, illegal and wrong."

He dismissed a Western assertion that military force could yet solve the nuclear dispute if negotiations proved fruitless as "delusional ..., rude and offensive," pledging that Iran would pursue peaceful nuclear research "forever."

In a gesture of national resolve ahead of the meeting with the six powers next week in Vienna, Iran test-fired two new domestically made missiles on Monday.

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