

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Monday in Paris that any new sanctions over Iran's nuclear program should not hurt the general population.



### Defense Policy Calls for Regional Collaboration

Defense Minister General Ahmad Vahidi said Monday Iran's defense policy is built on interaction and cooperation with other countries.

"Defense policy, as an important pillar of Iran's foreign strategy, can and should play a key role in achieving foreign policy objectives," he said in a meeting in Tehran with a group of Iranian envoys serving overseas, PressTV reported.

"In addition to repelling foreign threats, an effective defense strategy can also contribute to foreign interaction."

Vahidi said defense Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), such as the one recently signed with Qatar, can contribute to regional security stability.

The minister urged the envoys to help achieve the declared goals of the Islamic state.

Iran and the neighboring Persian Gulf state of Qatar signed an agreement on the expansion of defense cooperation on February 24.

Vahidi said regional cooperation is crucial for sustaining stability. "Enemies of peace and stability in the Middle East are trying to create discord among friendly relations between neighbors."



#### > Need for Caution

A senior military commander told the diplomats Monday that regional states stand to undermine their legitimacy by signing military accords with world powers.

Deputy chief of staff of the armed forces, General Gholam-Ali Rashid, said hegemonic powers will never recognize the sovereignty of others and thus courting their partnership will result in the loss of power of regional countries.

"You need to stand strong against superpowers," PressTV quoted Rashid as saying in an apparent reference to Arab countries in the region. "They [world powers] will recognize you only when they realize that confrontation will be more costly than recognizing you," he stated.

He added that only nations capable and willing to build their strength and put it to use will be able to defend their interests.

Regarding foreign policy, Rashid said Tehran should rely on powerful deterrence, particularly strong military capability.

On Sunday the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Iran's approach toward international relations is "anti-hegemonic".

### Kyrgyz Envoy Summoned Over Rigi Arrest Remarks

The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday summoned Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to protest his government's denial that Jundallah ringleader Abdolmalek Rigi was on board its national carrier and was arrested in Iran on February 23 after the flight was forced to land by Iranian fighter jets.

The ministry summoned the Kyrgyz envoy shortly after that country said no foreign national had been arrested by Iran on a Kyrgyz commercial flight last month.

"Information... published in sections of the media about the detention of foreign nationals on board the Kyrgyzstan Airlines aircraft does not correspond with reality," the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry said in a statement issued on Monday.

However, shortly after the incident, Kyrgyz aviation authorities confirmed that two people were detained after Iranian fighter jets intercepted a Kyrgyz airliner and forced it to land on (the southern port city of) Bandar Abbas.

The Kyrgyz ambassador condemned terrorist attacks carried out by Rigi's group in Iran and said he would convey Iran's concerns to his government, PressTV reported.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmansar said on Monday that there is evidence proving that Rigi was arrested on a Kyrgyz plane, PressTV reported.

He condemned the use of regional countries' territory to threaten Iran's national security.

Mehmansar urged Bishkek to respect international law in the campaign against terrorism.

Rigi, who was arrested on a flight from Dubai to Kyrgyzstan, confessed that he was to meet a high-ranking US official at Manas military base near Bishkek.

He said he was going to discuss new terrorist attacks on Iran.

Meanwhile, informed sources have told Press TV that several Kyrgyz security guards were protecting Rigi and his deputy inside the plane.

Rigi, who says he was supported by foreign spy agencies in his bid to undermine Iran's national security, is responsible for many cross-border terrorist attacks from Pakistan against Iranian officials and civilians largely in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchestan.

### Ukraine Orange Coalition

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Tymoshenko, who has refused to recognize Yanukovich's election victory, lashed out at her former allies in parliament, telling reporters:

"Today they destroyed the last bastion, the last barricade defending our Ukraine."

A formal announcement of the collapse of the coalition and a motion of no confidence in the government have to occur for Yanukovich's supporters to begin the difficult process of creating a new government.

# SEC Chief: Ummah Urged to Embrace Moderation



The 23rd International Conference on Islamic Unity opened in Tehran on Tuesday.

#### > By Sadeq Dehqan

Chairman of the State Expediency Council (SEC) Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani Tuesday said the Muslim world can and should be the strongest international community because of its size and the means and facilities available to it.

Addressing the opening of the 23rd International Conference on Islamic Unity in Tehran, he said "The Islamic world is still far from unity, which obviously is incompatible with the teachings of the religion and the Holy Qur'an and the demand of wisdom."

"Among the effective ways for forging unity is to think freely, prevent discord and regularly underscore Islamic ethics."

The former president said it is not acceptable that 60 independent Muslim countries, which are located in the best geographical regions and blessed with the guidance of the Holy Qur'an, cannot get their acts together.

#### > Unity Not Robust

"I am not implying that we do not have unity...rather the unity is not sturdy. The values and merits of unity are clear while the harm done by wastage of resources and opportunities is also evident."

"There are different types of rifts in all societies. For example, there are different factions in Christian communities...but more is expected from Islam given the teachings of the Holy

#### Qur'an."

He added that "Extremism has no place in Islam as it stems from historical disparities and diversions of mankind. The best approach is the pursuit of moderation that helps resolve problems. I do see the waves of sedition in and outside the region that mainly are linked to political conflict."

Head of the Assembly for Proximity of Islamic Faith Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Tashkiri said the annual meeting seeks to help overcome problems in the Muslim nations which throughout history has led to sectarianism.

Former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani told the conferees that unity among the Ummah is not an obligation but the need of the hour.

"The foundation of Islam is based on unity among the Ummah. Islam considers unity as a binding principle not only for Muslims but also for all other peoples..."

"One reason behind clashes among Muslims is the abuse by politicians of the existing rifts among believers."

They use the so-called divide and rule strategy to fulfill their goals and in the process spread strife among Muslims," the Afghan professor noted.

The conference will run till Thursday. Scholars and experts from Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Algeria, Greece, America, Australia, Denmark, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Germany and Russia are attending.

## Protest Near Norway Embassy

Dozens of people demonstrated in front of the Norwegian Embassy in Tehran on Monday to protest Oslo's interventionist policies.

Protesters shouted 'Down with the US' and 'Down with hypocrites,' PressTV reported. They released a statement asking Norway's government to stop insulting Muslim sanctities.

The group also demanded Norway condemn the publication of anti-Islamic cartoons and also cease support for anti-Iran terrorist groups.

Iran has criticized Norway for allowing the reprinting of blasphemous cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the Aftenposten newspaper.

The paper reprinted blasphemous caricatures by Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, which were first published by Jyllands-Posten in 2005.

Protesters urged the Majlis to downgrade relations with Norway.

Norway granted asylum to an Iranian diplomat serving in that country on February 18 who had resigned in January to protest Tehran's strong response to the post-election unrests in Tehran

other cities.

Norway's immigration department gave Mohammad Reza Heydari and his family permission to stay in Norway as political refugees after going through "all necessary information pertaining to the case," Norwegian Immigration



Norwegian embassy in Tehran.

Directorate spokeswoman Bente Engstrand said. Iran has blamed the West, particularly the US and Britain, for instigating and supporting the unrests that erupted after the bitterly contested vote in which Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was reelected.

## Cultural Counselors...

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#### > Expanding D-8 Agenda

Also on Tuesday, the Leader met with industry ministers of the Group of the eight developing countries (D-8) and emphasized the need for closer cooperation between the member states.

Pointing to the cultural and religious commonalities, the strategic situation, great energy resources and the big populations of the member states, Ayatollah Khamenei said "Cooperation among D-8 member-states can serve as a model for all Islamic countries...Industrial cooperation between the states can produce positive results for the Muslim world," www.leader.ir reported.

He referred to Iran's support for D-8, saying "The Islamic Republic is ready to share its scientific and industrial experience with other Muslim nations."

Ayatollah Khamenei noted that "Given their vast natural and human resources, Muslim states should cooperate closely to augment their status to a higher level on the world scene."

#### > Meeting With Ahmadinejad

The D-8 industrial ministers also met President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Tuesday and the president strongly criticized the West's economic attitude.

Ahmadinejad described capitalism as a method which consists of discrimination and cheating blinded by profit seeking and said "Capitalists seek to plunder the wealth of other nations," IRNA reported. As evidence of this "we can see that the US central bank has printed over \$29 trillion in worthless greenbacks and distributed around the world to cover its own debts. But it still is suffering from a \$14 trillion deficit."

Established in 1997 in Turkey, D-8 is membered by Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Turkey.

## Armenia, Turkey Urged...

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Moratinos is expected to meet with Sargsyan and Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian during his visit.

#### > Border Remains Closed

The Armenian-Turkish border has been closed since 1993 on Ankara's initiative. Bilateral relations are complicated over the genocide issue as well as by Turkey's support of Azerbaijan's position in the Nagorno Karabakh problem. Azerbaijan recently renewed threats of military action to retake disputed Nagorno Karabakh over a lack of progress in talks with Armenia.

A fragile ceasefire has been in place in the region since a brutal war in the 1990s between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the disputed enclave inside Azerbaijan with a predominantly ethnic Armenian population. Some 30,000 people died in the conflict, which erupted after the mountainous region declared independence in 1991. Karabakh has been under Armenian control since a Russian-brokered ceasefire in 1994.

## Perspective

### American 'Criticism' of Israel

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Bur since it rabidly refuses to accept east Beit-ul-Moqaddas as part of the West bank, expansion of settlements in that part of the old city has continued unabated.

Israel continues expanding settlements under what it claims is "natural growth" and buildings intended for education purposes.

When George W. Bush and the radical neocons ruled the White House, the self-appointed superpower's roadmap called for a two-state solution to help pave the way for peace and stability in the troubled region. That proposal remains the mainstay of the Obama crew.

From the outset Israel opposed to the roadmap and regarding an independent Palestinian state it insisted that that it should be demilitarized, not decide foreign policy without Israeli approval, its airspace should be controlled by Israel...

Suffice to say that such an unseen and unheard 'independent state' lacking the basic ingredients of freedom and sovereignty can and should be billed as a colony with a different name.

At present Obama has been pushing for some sort of indirect talks between the two warring sides. This means returning to ground zero after 16 years of failed and futile negotiations. It is obvious that that no problem will be resolved in this way.

Israel is not willing to respond to the Goldstone report on war crimes in Gaza and has attacked Al Aqsa Mosque and built some 600 new settlements in east Beit-ul-Moqaddas. Last month it went so far as to use dozens of passports of several European countries for Mossad agents to murder senior Hamas military commander Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh in Dubai.

America's response to the catalog of Israeli crimes has been a rare rebuke. The reason behind for the softness is that neither the US nor Europe want the crisis to be over. It is understandable that the Europeans do not want to interfere directly without the tacit approval of the Obama White House. And who does not know what America as a matter of policy has always worked to 'manage' the crisis not 'solve' it.

It is obvious that if the present grave conditions continue there will be more violence in the Middle East and the parties responsible for it will be the western governments that for decades have supported and funded Israel and its naked lawlessness.