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**Military force must be considered**  
By Lawrence J. Haas

WASHINGTON – Make no mistake: U.N. Security Council sanctions and additional U.S. and European pressures are hurting Iran.

Tehran is having a harder time importing food and other key goods, its foreign investment is drying up, financial firms and shipping companies are turning down its business, and its central bank is running short of hard currency.

What sanctions are not doing, however, is achieving their goal – to persuade Tehran to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons. Not only is Iran making more progress in its nuclear program, it's acting more boldly in its region, threatening U.S. interests while distributing weapons that are killing U.S. troops.

Because neither current nor additional sanctions alone will deter Tehran, and because a nuclear Iran would be a disaster for the United States and the world, Washington must seriously consider a military option.

Such an option – ranging from an embargo on vital goods to a covert sabotage of Iran's nuclear sites to an overt strike on them – brings two benefits.

First, a believable U.S. threat of force might get Tehran's attention, forcing the regime to ponder whether its nuclear pursuit is worth a military confrontation. Second, military force ultimately might be the only way to destroy Iran's program or slow it down significantly enough to avert a disaster.

Sanctions are hard to enforce under any circumstances, and those against Iran are no exception. Reuters reported recently, for instance, that China and Iran are discussing how to construct a barter system to bypass U.S. sanctions that make it hard for countries to do business with Iran in dollars.

Iran's nuclear progress continues apace. It's producing low-grade uranium at its highest rate ever and reportedly has enough uranium – if further enriched – to build four atomic bombs.

Tehran announced recently that it's preparing to triple production of higher grade uranium by installing more advanced centrifuges at its plant in Qom. As British Foreign Secretary William Hague has written, that could cut the time Iran needs to make weapons-grade material to two to three months.

Tehran is also making progress in its ballistic missile program.

Combined with its nuclear progress, that means Iran eventually will be able to deploy nuclear weapons on missiles that can travel longer distances.

The regime conducted war games in July, test-firing different missiles and revealing underground missile silos. Some Iranian missiles already can reach Europe, making clear that Iran seeks influence beyond the Middle East.

The United States recently leveled two other charges against Tehran – that it's helping al-Qaida funnel cash and people into Pakistan for global terrorist operations, and that the weapons it is shipping to Iranian-backed militias in Iraq are killing U.S. troops at an unprecedented pace.

The weapons include roadside bombs that can penetrate even well-protected U.S. vehicles and rockets filled with explosives that target U.S. bases.

Israeli intelligence says Iran has capitalized on recent regional unrest to extend its influence in at least Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. It assisted Syria in suppressing demonstrations against the regime, helped plan the confrontations through which crowds tried to breach Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon, and sought closer ties with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood before planned September elections.

With nuclear weapons, Iran could deter the United States and others from trying to rein it in. The regime then would be far better positioned to extend its influence across the region and beyond, destabilize other governments, protect the terrorists that it sponsors and funds and, in the worst case, provide nuclear weapons to one of its terrorist clients or use such a weapon itself.

The United States can't take that chance. Sanctions will not work by themselves. Washington needs a military option both to give sanctions a better chance of working and to consider if all else fails.

#### ABOUT THE WRITER

Lawrence J. Haas is senior fellow for U.S. foreign policy at the American Foreign Policy Council. Readers may write him at AFPC, 509 C Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20002; website: [www.afpc.org](http://www.afpc.org).

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