RUSSIA-IRAN: Planning Nuclear Power Cooperation

Russia is nearing a decision to sell nuclear reactors to Iran, according to US Embassy reporting. Citing the need for hard currency and for employment for reactor scientists, Moscow is considering the sale of two VVER-440 reactors, as well as technical cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and an exchange of scientists.

Russia finds Western allegations that Iran poses a nuclear weapons proliferation threat unimpressive. He also said neither the recent IAEA inspection of Iranian nuclear facilities nor Russian intelligence sources had revealed any nuclear weapons program in Iran.

Comment: Iran legitimately needs increased electrical power production; and the VVER-440 reactors—which almost certainly would be under IAEA safeguards—are ill suited to the production of weapons material. Russia's economic interests may prevail over nuclear concerns; the reactor sale could bring them up to $4 billion. The proposed cooperation could, however, create opportunities for Iran to acquire training and equipment proscribed under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.