The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Iran's Leader Accuses Medvedev of Betrayal

July 25, 2010



TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's leader accused President Dmitry Medvedev on Friday of turning against Tehran and joining the United States in spreading lies about its nuclear program, in the latest sign that Iran is drifting apart from a one-time key backer.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Medvedev entered a "propaganda drama" directed by Washington by saying the previous week that Iran was getting closer to being able to develop nuclear weapons.

"Russia is a great nation, and we are interested in continuing friendship between the two nations, but his remarks are part of a propaganda drama that is to be carried out by the U.S. president against the Iranian nation," Ahmadinejad said in a speech posted on his web site Friday.

"In fact, Mr. Medvedev has kick-started this drama," he said.

Ahmadinejad has had harsh words for Moscow since it became apparent that Russia would

support last month's new United Nations sanctions against Tehran for its refusal to stop parts of its nuclear program. In the past, Iran had depended on allies Russia and China — and their veto power at the Security Council — to block tough penalties.

Iran insists that its nuclear work is only for generating power and other peaceful uses. The United States and its allies accuse Iran of using its civilian nuclear program as a cover to develop nuclear weapons capability.

Medvedev said earlier this month that although Iran is "an active and trusted trading partner ... this does not mean we don't care how it develops its nuclear program and what its military components look like. In this respect, we expect explanations from Iran."

He also urged Iran to find the courage to cooperate with the international community over its disputed nuclear program.

On Friday, Ahmadinejad answered back, saying Medvedev was joining the United States against Iran and harming Russia's interests.

Ahmadinejad first delivered unusual criticism of Medvedev in May, accusing him of caving in to U.S. pressure for new sanctions, saying, "Justifying the behavior of Mr. Medvedev today has become very difficult."

Russia has a series of energy and weapons contracts with Iran, including a batch of sophisticated S-300 ground-to-air defense missiles.

Last month, the Russian government said the new UN sanctions forbid delivering the weapons, while Iranian officials later insisted that the sanctions don't cover contracts signed before the restrictions entered force.

Russia and Iran penned the S-300 agreement in 2007, but their delivery has stalled amid pressure from the West.

Earlier this month, Sergei Chemezov, head of state-owned Russian Technologies, said the contract had not been annulled pending a decision from Medvedev.

The truck-mounted S-300 missiles can target aircraft, low-flying cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, weapons experts said.

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