

Russia Blocks Release of Iran Report

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UNITED NATIONS — Russia has blocked the publication of a UN report detailing Iran's alleged sanctions violations despite U.S., British and French calls for its release.

The report, submitted to the Security Council's Iran sanctions committee by an independent panel of experts, says Tehran has been breaking a UN arms embargo by shipping weapons to Syria, Western diplomats said.

But Russian Deputy Ambassador Alexander Pankin gave no indication that Moscow would allow the document to be published.

"Unverified or politicized information should not help to promote any initiatives in the Security Council or in the committee," he said late last week.

China, which has blocked similar reports on Sudan and on North Korea's violations of the UN sanctions imposed on it after its nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, echoed Pankin.

Chinese delegate Yang Tao said Beijing wants the panel to "work in keeping with the principles of neutrality, objectivity and independence and on the basis of reliable

information.”

The United States, Britain and France have been pushing for the committee, which makes decisions on the basis of consensus, to publish the report, but Russia will not allow it, envoys said. The feud broke into the open Thursday during a Security Council meeting on the UN sanctions regime against Iran.

“The panel’s final report must be quickly disseminated to all UN member states as is standard practice for UN expert panels,” U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice told the 15-nation council.

“This report, which the council has not yet released publicly, highlights information and best practices that can help states carry out their obligations” regarding the Iran sanctions, she said. “It needs to be shared.”

The confidential report, obtained by Reuters, said most of Iran’s breaches of the UN arms embargo have been deliveries of weapons to Syria, which Western diplomats say were to be passed on to Lebanese and Palestinian militants.

The report by the Security Council’s so-called Panel of Experts, a group that reports on compliance with four rounds of UN sanctions imposed on Iran for refusing to halt its nuclear enrichment program, also says Tehran has been flouting the sanctions as it continues to develop its nuclear program.

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Friday that sanctions imposed by the United States on a major Iranian port operator and the country’s national airline may affect Russian companies and “raise serious questions.”

“Such actions, based on an extra-territorial use of U.S. law, potentially create a situation when Russian business structures cooperating with these companies could be affected,” the ministry said in a statement.

It did not specify which Russian entities could be affected.

Washington’s latest actions prohibit U.S. entities from any transactions with Tidewater Middle East Co., which operates seven port facilities in Iran, and Iran Air, which serves 35 international and 25 domestic destinations with a fleet of about 40 aircraft.

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