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Israel gives qualified okay to Obama's interim deal with Iran

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Obama and Netanyahu

Israel's Binyamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak have decided to stand back for Barack Obama to put his interim deal with Iran to the test, debkafile's sources report. They decided to go along with it despite their reservations after receiving assurances from the White House that any Iranian violations would result in the immediate termination of all negotiations and bring military action forward as the sole remaining option for stopping a nuclear Iran. It was not clear if US

intended to exercise the military itself. The Obama administration handed similar assurances to the G-8 leaders meeting at Camp David Saturday May 19.

Israel's qualified acquiescence to the deal negotiated by Washington was accompanied by assertions by its ministers that Iran was lying about its nuclear intentions and playing the world for a fool. Tehran would therefore not stand up to the test.

Saturday, debkafile's Washington and Iranian sources exclusively revealed the eight points of the interim deal put forward by Washington and still awaiting Tehran's concurrence. Read on...Y

Yukiya Amano, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, is entrusted with a decisive mission in Tehran Sunday, May 20: collecting Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's broad endorsement of the interim eight-point deal he and US President Barack Obama have drafted through secret dialogue. debkafile has obtained exclusive access to the eight points - with the caveat that they may not be final. The details are still to be hammered out and proved practicable. But the way the deal stands now, it will be unacceptable to Israel because it affords Iran enough leeway to carry on developing a nuclear bomb program with no real hindrance.

The White House is waiting tensely for Khamenei's nod to activate the link promised by Obama between their back-track talks and the formal negotiations the Six Powers (P5+1) negotiations with Iran, which go forward in Baghdad on May 23. This link would grant the bilateral US-Iranian deal UN-world power imprimatur and vindicate the US president's contested Iran policy.

From that moment, Israel would find it doubly hard to go through with its military option against Iran's nuclear sites without risk of international isolation and opprobrium.

Until that moment, the Obama administration had found Israel's threatening stance useful for bending Iran to a diplomatic accommodation on its nuclear plans, while at the same time holding Jerusalem back from actually going through with its threat.

It was this double game that made the US-Iranian dialogue workable.

It was also used adroitly by Khamenei to achieve another of the Islamic Republic's key strategic goals, to destroy the abiding friendship between the US and the Zionist state. The Iranian leader's main argument to his colleagues in support of his secret dealings with the US president was that sanctions were well worth enduring if at the end of the road a deal with the US forced a breach between Washington and Jerusalem and so substantially weakened the Jewish state.

debkafile has obtained exclusive access to the eight-point draft with the caveat that it may not be final; the details remained to be hammered out and proved practicable:

1. Because the US and Iran agree that a real and comprehensive accord for halting Tehran's

nuclear program is unobtainable, they are accepting an interim agreement with each party at liberty to interpret its substance and future implementation in its own manner.

debkafile: This wording allows Obama to assure the American voter and Western public that Tehran has capitulated on its nuclear ambitions while, at the same time, Khamenei portrays America to Iranians and Muslims as having yielded on recognizing Iran's right to develop an independent nuclear program, enrich uranium and continue its drive for a bomb.

2. Iran will suspend uranium enrichment up to the near-weapons grade of 20 percent but not dismantle or stop work at the Fordo underground nuclear plant as Israel demands.

3. Iran will export its stock of 110 kilograms of 20-percent enriched uranium which can be used for producing a weapon. This material will be reprocessed and returned as fuel plates from which it is much more difficult though not impossible to make a bomb.

4. No ceiling will be placed on the production of low-enriched uranium of 3.5-5 percent purity.

debkafile: Washington tacitly grants this concession by leaving it off the record.

5. Iran will sign the Non-Proliferation Accord's additional protocol and so permit the expansion of IAEA on-site inspections.

6. The secret Iranian nuclear sites of which Washington has no explicit knowledge will also be omitted from the record and therefore outside the sphere of international inspection.

debkafile: The guiding principle governing America's approach to the eight-point interim accord therefore is, "Don't know; don't want to see."

7. The US and European Union will dilute sanctions against Iran stage by stage. debkafile: Here too, dual tactics will be used: The formal embargo on Iran's central bank and its exclusion from the SWIFT international money transfer system will not be formally annulled. However a blind eye will be applied to any small banks in the West executing Iran's international business, just as the sanction-busting measures used by China, Russia, India and Turkey to their trade with Iran, were tolerated.

8. The US and Europe will revoke the oil embargo due to go into effect on July 1, 2012.

debkafile: While the Obama administration has given its "agreement-in-principle on the interim deal," the Iranian leader has not yet endorsed it. Hence the Amano mission to Tehran Sunday.

If he comes away with a nod from Tehran, Obama will have achieved two key objectives: the world power talks with Iran can proceed through sessions spaced several weeks apart until the November date of the US presidential election, and Israel will be constrained from striking Iran before that date.

Last week, Israel reiterated its demand for Iran to stop uranium enrichment at any grade and dismantle the Fordo nuclear facility as non-negotiable.

The interim agreement drafted by Obama and Khamenei will therefore be unacceptable to Israel because it provides for neither and so affords Iran enough leeway to carry on developing a nuclear bomb program with no real hindrance.