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## Secret US-Russian sanctions vs Bushehr deal tied Israel's hands

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Only photo allowed of Bushehr start-up

The Obama administration and Netanyahu government greeted the start-up of Iran's first nuclear reactor at Bushehr with extraordinary meekness, given the grim military and strategic hazards it represents for the region and Israel in particular. Yet nary a squeak of protest came from Washington or Jerusalem when Russian technicians began loading 162 rods of 82 tons of fuel into Iran's nuclear reactor - a process that will take two weeks - Saturday, Aug. 21 - notwithstanding US-led sanctions, Israel's military preparations and

international diplomatic posturing.

The State Department said Saturday after the event that Iran's Bushehr nuclear plant has "no proliferation threat" - a statement that was completely beside the point. **DEBKAfile** reveals that both the Kremlin and the State Department have joined in concealing the secret deal whereby Russia votes for UN Security Council sanctions against Iran in return for US silent acquiescent to Moscow's activation of the Bushehr reactor.

The price the Obama administration and the Netanyahu government paid was prohibitive: Vladimir Putin was allowed to jump the Iranian nuclear drive miles forward toward a capacity for producing weapons-grade plutonium. (Moscow claims the rods will be returned, but Iran's capacity for deception and concealment in the entire last decade is well documented.)

Both Obama and Netanyahu had been beguiled into trusting that President Dmitry Medvedev's tougher line on Iran would prevail in the Kremlin. But Medvedev was nowhere to be seen last Monday, Aug. 15 when Putin took the risk of ceremonially assigning Sergei Kirienko, head of Rosatom, with shipping fuel to Bushehr within a week and getting the reactor on stream, after years of delays.

The Russian leader got away with showing the Muslim world the worth of Moscow's backing - upstaging the side show put on in Washington the day before when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the onset of direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks on Sept. 2 - a process which the greenest of Middle East pundits appreciates as having nowhere to go.

The Netanyahu government was supposed to have all its worries swept away by the US assurance that the Iran threat is not imminent but eleven months away, as the New York Times reported Friday, Aug. 20. The next day the London Telegraph mocked this assertion by explaining that US officials were really saying that "the process of converting nuclear material into a weapon that worked would take at least 12 months" - a prospect hardly likely to ease Israel's concerns.

Omitting any comment on the Bushehr reactor, Prime Minister Netanyahu stated that Israel's security would be paramount in a deal with the Palestinians. He issued a list of stipulations, such as the demilitarization of territory handed to the Palestinians - only side arms for police; Israel would retain control of the Jordan Rift Valley bordering the Kingdom of Jordan and the mountain ridges forming the spine of the West Bank, they key to defending Jerusalem and Israel's coastal plain.

Many will recall the prime minister's solemn reiterations that a nuclear-armed Iran would pose an existential threat to Israel and noticed how fast they have faded.

His "security pledges" regarding a future Palestinian state on the West Bank should therefore

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