

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Majid Takht Ravanchi
Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
Before the United Nations Security Council
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In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

Mr. President,

Today, the Security Council is considering a draft resolution presented by a country which has a long dark record of fabrications and disinformation throughout the world and this Council is no stranger to such dissemination of falsehood. It seems that in order to promote its short-sighted political interests, the U.S. is addicted to spread lies. A lie has no legs.

For many years, the U.S., misusing its permanent membership in the Council, has attempted to portray Iran as a threat to international peace and security and to propose sanctions on Iran. One example is its current proposal for imposing an indefinite comprehensive arms embargo on my country. Is there any sound legal and objective security justification for such action? Can arms import and export by Iran be considered a threat to international peace and security? And, what is the ultimate goal of the U.S. in this whole exercise?

From a legal perspective, under Resolution 2231, following the termination of current restrictions, no arms embargo can be imposed on Iran for the following reasons:

- 1) According to the JCPOA which is annexed to Resolution 2231 and through its endorsement by the Council, has become *legally binding* on all Member States, there will be no new Security Council sanctions;
- 2) It will be against the Council's policy of "fundamental shift" as well as its "desire to build a new relationship with Iran" as affirmed and expressed in Resolution 2231;
- 3) It will also be against the Council's intent, as expressed in Resolution 2231, on "promoting and facilitating the development of normal economic and trade contacts and cooperation with Iran", which naturally includes arms trade too;
- 4) Any change in the already-agreed measures or timelines, by changing a well-crafted balance embedded in Resolution 2231, will affect several other parts thereof. The Resolution, as itself defines, is based on "a step-by-step approach", "includes the reciprocal commitments" -- the implementation and termination of which are subject to identified timelines -- and requires States to comply with its provisions "for their respective durations";
- 5) It is against the call by the Security Council on all Member States "to support the implementation of the JCPOA" and to refrain "from actions that undermine implementation of

commitments under the JCPOA” as well as for the JCPOA’s “full implementation on the timetable established” therein;

According to Annex B to Resolution 2231, the “duration” of arrangements including on arms “may be reviewed”. However, Annex B is inherently designed to ensure that the provisions be terminated on the agreed timelines, as such a decision must be made by the Council based on a *consensual recommendation* by the *Joint Commission* where the U.S. is not a member to propose such extension and Iran as a member will not accept such a proposal.

6) It is crystal clear that any arms embargo against Iran will be against all promises made to Iran in different parts of Resolution 2231 and JCPOA and endorsed by the Council. This can set a dangerous precedent, weakening the Council’s authority and eroding the trust and confidence in the Council, in its decisions and, by extension, in the UN itself. The main victims however will be the principles of justice, rule of law, dialogue, diplomacy and trust; and

7) Even beyond the JCPOA and resolution 2231 – which, due to their direct substantive relevance can, in no way, be disregarded or overlooked -- the Security Council may impose sanctions only when it determines “the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression”; and more importantly, exhausts employing all possible solutions other than sanctions, which must be the last choice if need be. Now, the question is whether such conditions exist regarding Iran thus allowing the Council to act. This assessment, of course, cannot be made in vacuum or on political motivations, fabrications, lies and phony charges of certain member or members of the Council; rather it must be based on objective irrefutable facts, namely the security realities in the region.

So, let’s take a quick look at the situation in the region, starting with the policies and practices of the U.S: a country which is not located in our region but has been meddling, for decades, in our affairs some 6000 miles away from its shores.

Only in Iran’s 6 neighboring countries in the Persian Gulf, the U.S. has deployed nearly 50,000 troops, with more than 300 combat aircrafts, an aircraft carrier as well as tens of destroyers and ships with four Central Command Headquarters for its Army, Air, Marine and Special Forces.

Out of over 40 Western military installations in the Middle East, 29 belong to America. Such massive buildup has turned the region into the highest concentration of foreign military installations in the world.

Let’s now turn to the unquenchable appetite of the U.S. to export arms to this region and the inordinate craving of the U.S.’ regional allies to import them.

Saudi Arabia, by importing over 12% of ALL arms exported globally, by far has been the largest arms importer in the world in 2015-2019, 73% of which came from the U.S.. Only remember the \$110 billion worth of U.S.-Saudi arms deal in 2017, described by President Trump as “the largest order ever made”. Saudi Arabia was the third largest military spender in 2018 and fifth in 2019 and devoted 8% of its GDP to military expenditure in 2019: the highest worldwide. Being by far

the largest military spender in the Middle East, it also continues modernizing and expanding its military forces and according to SIPRI, currently, it “has the largest inventory of advanced weapons” among the Persian Gulf States.

Where does Iran stand? The level of Iran’s arms imports decreased significantly in 1994-2018. According to SIPRI, the volume of Iran’s arms imports in this period was relatively small compared with the volumes imported by many other States in the Middle East. In 2009-2019, Iran was ranked 57th arms importer globally. Iran’s military expenditure in 2019 was five times less than that of Saudi Arabia and Iran devoted only 2.3% of its GDP to military expenditure in 2019, which is 3.5 time less than that of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. President, distinguished Council members,

What do these facts and figures reveal? Do they imply even an iota of threat to or breach of peace by Iran?

If anything, they clearly imply that there is an alarming trend in the region: an extremely furious flood of advanced weaponry, mostly U.S.-made arms, to certain regional States as well as the massive buildup of foreign forces, armed to teeth with all types of the most sophisticated armaments which are the real sources of instability in our region.

The arms exported to this volatile region has not only been used extensively to prolong death and destruction in Yemen, but also to fan and fuel other conflicts from Iraq to Syria to Libya.

Likewise, foreign forces -- who always mask their real missions under such euphemistic popular terms as “to ensure freedom of navigation” and “promote maritime stability” -- are involved in a range of invasive, intrusive, disruptive and subversive activities in our region. The invasions, false flag operations and espionage activities perpetrated by foreign forces, coupled with the well-known policy of “*divide and rule*” of their respective governments, have not only targeted trust and confidence among the regional nations who have coexisted peacefully for over centuries, but have also resulted in more insecurity and instability in our neighborhood.

Consequently, we, the regional nations, are paying a very high price for such ill-intentioned policies of Western countries and the presence of their forces in our region. Above all, I am specifically referring to the human toll.

One example is the 2003 illegal invasion of Iraq by the U.S., whose then politicians introduced it as no more real than a video game, and whose current politicians mourn, not for the loss of lives, but only for the misspending of America’s money! The U.S. invasion of Iraq left millions of dead, wounded and displaced persons. Of course, no one forgets the crimes American forces committed brutally in different parts of Iraq including in Abu Ghoraib Prison.

Iran is also a main victim of the presence of foreign forces. For instance, in 1987 and 1988, the U.S. Navy destroyed three Iranian oil platforms in the Persian Gulf. The International Court of Justice rejected any “legal justification for the destruction of the platforms” and even called it “the violation of freedom of commerce”.

In 1988, the U.S. forces targeted an Iranian civil aircraft over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 people on board, including 66 children: the deadliest aviation disaster in 1988.

In 2011, an American unmanned spy plane invaded Iran's air space and flew 250 kilometers deep into the Iranian territory where it was captured by Iran. Later the U.S. President requested its return which was rejected.

In 2019, a U.S. unmanned aircraft system, taken off from one of the U.S. bases in the Persian Gulf States, violated the Iranian airspace and engaged in a clear spying operation. Unattended to repeated radio warnings, it was downed.

In early 2020, in a terrorist attack at the direct order of the U.S. President, the American forces horrifically assassinated Major General Qasem Soleimani and his companions at Baghdad International Airport; a real gift to Daesh. The overwhelming majority of international lawyers, including a number of UN mandate holders, have rejected the U.S.'s legal justifications for such a criminal act and called it a gross violation of the UN Charter and international law.

These are only a few examples of numerous unlawful, subversive and provocative measures taken by the U.S. forces against Iran. It is ironic that with such a dark record of aggression, intrusion and disruptive actions in our region, now the U.S. is accusing Iran of destabilizing behavior in the region. Like its deep addiction to impose sanctions on others, deception is also an inseparable part of U.S. foreign policy.

Mr. President,

For many years, the U.S. had created a manufactured crisis about Iran's nuclear program. However, the JCPOA's conclusion rendered that ploy useless. Now, the U.S. is manufacturing a new crisis under the so-called label of "arms proliferation". There is no "arms proliferation" by Iran as falsely claimed by the U.S. officials. We have already categorically rejected all such uncorroborated self-serving allegations.

After testing the waters in the Council for a few months, last week the U.S., in clear violation of Resolution 2231, proposed a draft resolution on arms embargo against Iran which was faced with a cold shoulder from members of the Council. In order to advance its goal by whatever means, the U.S. also resorted to deceptive methods like shortening its 13-page draft to 4 short paragraphs without any changes in its nature and intended goal, to illustrate its apparent flexibility. Likewise, to create a legal mess and confusion, it has also recalled, in its second draft resolution, 6 Resolutions of the Council, all of which were terminated almost 5 years ago!

This week, the U.S. urged the Council to vote on the second version of the draft resolution even knowing in advance that it would not enjoy the support within the Council. The question is why it is resorting to such an exercise? Because, based on its miscalculations, the U.S. wants to use it as a pretext to realize its *ultimate goal* of killing the JCPOA forever through the snap back mechanism, while, as a non-participant to the JCPOA, the U.S. is not eligible to trigger that mechanism.

Here, the Council, as the guarantor of its own decisions, must act responsibly and decisively and prove that it is able and willing to support the JCPOA it has endorsed; protect Resolution 2231 it has adopted unanimously; and ensure its own authority and credibility.

As we have made it clear, the timetable for the removal of arms restrictions in Resolution 2231 is an inseparable part of the hard-won compromise enabling final agreement on the overall package of the JCPOA and that Resolution. The Resolution explicitly urges its “full implementation on the *timetable*”. Any attempt to change or amend the agreed timetable is thus tantamount to undermining Resolution 2231 in its entirety.

The Council must not allow the abuse and manipulation of its work as it did in the past when the Council was ineffective in preventing Saddam’s aggression against Iran and the use of chemical weapons against Iranians and Iraqis.

As we have already stated, imposition of any sanctions or restrictions on Iran by the Security Council will be met severely by Iran and our options are not limited. And the United States and any entity which may assist it or acquiesce in its illegal behavior, will bear the full responsibility.

Allow me to conclude, Mr. President, by underlining that no one can deny the ongoing alarming trend of regression from a *rules-based multilateralism* into a *power-based unilateralism*. The international community should not allow the “knee on neck” policy to be tolerated at our time anymore.

Let’s be fair and square. Historically, *appeasement* has never served humanity’s common interests. Conversely, it has only further emboldened the bullying powers. In this turbulent time, all States, particularly members of this Council, have a moral and ethical responsibility to do whatever in their power to restore faith in *values, purposes* and *principles* enshrined in the UN Charter. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations who will have to live with the consequences of our action and inaction.

I thank you, Mr. President.