

---

# The West takes notice as Russia and Iran get closer

By Pyotr Goncharov  
RIA Novosti - 28/12/2007

---

The West appears amazed to see Russian-Iranian strategic partnership surviving and even strengthening.

This partnership is quite logical, but the West turned its attention to it only with supplies of Russian long range surface-to-air S-300 missiles. Due to start in January, these supplies were agreed upon a long time ago. Judging by the response of the media, the West is panicky to see Russia stick to the promise.

The Guardian warns that modernized Russian air defense missile systems can hit U.S. and Israeli war aircraft, and S-300 are even better than Patriots at intercepting cruise missiles and IBM. But then, why would Iran need such weapons? Will they come on friendly visits or what?

The New York Times regards the upcoming deal as another arbitrary Russian step and reproaches President Bush for his tolerance as Russia starts fuel exports to the Bushehr nuclear plant. The newspaper could have regarded the fuel and missile supplies as an asymmetrical response to the American ABM in Europe. The same logic could also apply to the Kosovo issue.

Besides, the United States is also capable of arbitrary moves. In 2002, it banged the door on the ABM Treaty without giving any thought to Russia's reaction. Now, it is spreading its anti-missile defense to Europe despite the problems it would cause for Russia and, for that matter, to Europe if Russia hit back.

But then, why is Moscow to believe Washington that the European ABM system is targeted at Iran and not Russia? Is the U.S. any better than Iran, which is trying to convince the world that it will have no nuclear weapons because they go against Muslim precepts?

With a recent shift of policy toward Iran, Russia is now determined to comply with its pledges on the Iranian nuclear program, though within limits set by the IAEA.

Whatever crisis may befall Iran, Russia stands to lose—for instance, if the UN Security Council toughens its sanctions and the United States and the European Union wind down partnership with Iran. The world went through a similar situation when Russia did much to stop the isolation of Iran.

No better to Russia would be a limited U.S. missile strike on Iran, which would overthrow its president. Things would be downright disastrous if America unleashed a total war. Russia would not gain, either, with a secret U.S.-Iranian agreement—which appears the least probable option of all. Russia would also lose if Iran obtained nuclear arms. That would be a danger no smaller than the American ABM in Europe.

There is only one wise thing Russia can do: join efforts with its partners to settle the Iranian problem without radical measures. This is what Moscow is trying to do now—suffice it to say that fuel supplies to Bushehr have been coordinated with the White House.

Now, is it possible at all to settle the Iranian problem without acting tough? Is Moscow ready to do so? And is Iran gambling on its contacts with Russia? There are no clear answers to those burning questions, and it is hard

to say whether S-300s have any bearing on them. Be that as it may, Russia will certainly bring its missiles to Iran.

The opinions expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of RIA Novosti.

---