

Former Obama Arms Control Aide Gary Samore confirms 2009 Iranian Enrichment Negotiations



Argentina President Cristina Kirchner

UN General Assembly

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The opaque nature of revelations about the Obama negotiations with Iran over nuclear enrichment just got murkier. Buried in a rambling putative valedictory speech by outgoing Argentine President Cristina Kirchner at the UN General Assembly on September 28th was a stunning revelation. Former Assistant to the President for Arms Control and Weapons of Mass Destruction, [Dr. Gary Samore](#), now Research Director at the Harvard's Belfer Center, had apparently reached out to Argentina to supply nuclear fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor in Iran. The eventual proposal was to have Russia convert 1,200 kg. of Iranian stocks of 5.0 % low enriched uranium hexafluoride into 19.5 % enriched uranium to be shipped to France for conversion into reactor rods and then shipped back to Tehran. The Kirchner speech opened a chapter on how early the Obama White House was in discussions with Iran trying to work a deal during the era of former Iranian President Ahmadinejad. According to Samore, the deal was nixed by Ayatollah Khamenei. This revelation is one more element building a case for why litigation against the deal, whether by Congress and/ or the states, should be pursued to uncover the whole history of negotiations that eventuated in

the controversial JCPOA.



Dr. Gary Samore

Samore was the founder of [United Against Nuclear Iran \(UANI\)](#) in 2008 before serving as Obama's Arms Control aide from 2009 to 2013. He had served in similar nuclear arms control capacities in the State Department during the Clinton Administration. Samore resigned from UANI in mid-August 2015, a month before a Congressional vote, since blocked, on the Iran nuclear pact or JCPOA negotiated by the P5+1 and announced on July 14th. The nuclear deal with Iran was unanimously endorsed by the UN Security Council on July 22, 2015. Samore justified his leave taking as President of UANI because JCPOA represented the best alternative to cut off Iran from achieving a nuclear weapons capability. This despite his concerns that even the inspection regime wouldn't uncover covert enrichment or development of nuclear warheads. Former Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman replaced Samore as head of UANI. [Watch](#) this *PBS News Hour* interview with Samore on August 12, 2015 on why he left the UANI.

Kirchner's UN General Assembly [speech](#) presented the Argentine version of this episode:

In 2010 we were visited in Argentina by Gary Samore, at that time the White House's top advisor in nuclear issues. He came to see us in Argentina with a mission, with an objective: under the control of IAEA, the international organization in the field of weapons control and nuclear regulation, Argentina had supplied in the year 1987, during the first democratic government, the nuclear fuel for the reactor known as "Tehran". Gary Samore had explained to our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Héctor Timerman, that negotiations were underway for the Islamic Republic of Iran to cease with its uranium enrichment

activities or to do it to a lesser extent but Iran claimed that it needed to enrich this Teheran nuclear reactor and this was hindering negotiations. They came to ask us, Argentines, to provide the Islamic Republic of Iran with nuclear fuel. Rohani was not in office yet. It was Ahmadinejad's administration and negotiations had already started.

[...]

The Minister of Foreign Affairs came to see me in my office, and I remember this very clearly, and I said that if this request were made in writing and signed, we could, after all, cooperate, because we believed that the attainment of the non-nuclear proliferation objective was of the utmost importance. I said as much to my Minister of Foreign Affairs who in turn relayed this to the White House's envoy, Gary Samore that we would accept to provide the fuel because it was in the hands of Argentina since 1987 and we also had the technique to produce it in exchange, obviously, for such request to be submitted in writing and signed. This message was conveyed and I believe that was the last time, after that communication, that our Minister of Foreign Affairs saw Gary Samore.

The Blaze contacted Samore who [confirmed](#) the details of the episode:

Story is true that I went to Buenos Aires in August 2009 to ask Foreign Minister Timmerman if Argentina would be willing to manufacture fresh fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor in exchange for Iran shipping most of its stockpile of low enriched uranium to Russia.

As I recall, Minister Timmerman told me that Argentina could not participate in the project because of Iran's refusal to cooperate in the AMIA investigation. I said that I understood the political sensitivities and accepted

that Argentina could not be part of the project.

We subsequently approached France, which agreed to manufacture the fuel for the Tehran Research Reactor.

In October 2009, Iran agreed to the deal: Iran would ship 1,200 kilograms of low enriched uranium hexafluoride (less than 5%) to Russia; Russia would further enrich the uranium to 19.5% and ship it to France for fabrication into research reactor fuel, which would then be shipped to Iran.

From Washington's standpoint, the objective of the agreement was to remove most of Iran's low enriched uranium stockpile at that time and therefore make it more difficult for Iran to produce weapons grade enriched uranium.

In the end, Supreme Leader Khamenei rejected the Tehran Research Reactor agreement and the deal fell through. Iran's rejection of the deal lead directly to President Obama deciding to increase economic and political pressure on Tehran, which produced UNSC Resolution 1929 in June 2010.

Why Samore opted to quit the opposition to the Iran nuclear deal, albeit with misgivings, belies the point. The Administration had begun secret negotiations with Iran under President Ahmadinejad in 2009, in which Samore had a critical role, only to leave in February 2013 well before the November 24, 2013 interim JPOA was announced. Stay tuned for developments.