

Iran Says US And Israel Are The Real Nuclear Threats

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The United States and Israel represent the real nuclear threat to the world, not Iran, Tehran's chief envoy to the United Nations said on Friday after an abortive conference on controlling nuclear weapons.

The Iranian ambassador to the UN Javad Zarif said the U.S. never intended to scrap its nuclear arsenal, despite promising to eventually disarm when it signed the 1970 nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the landmark arms control pact.

In an interview with Reuters Zarif said Israel, widely believed to have nuclear weapons, was the threat to the Middle East region. "There is unanimity on the threat that is posed not only by Israeli nuclear weapons but by its aggressive policy (in general)," he said.

Washington is backing efforts by Britain, France and Germany to persuade Tehran to halt its nuclear fuel program, which they claim is intended to make atomic bombs an allegation which Iran strenuously denies, insisting its program is for peaceful means.

Zarif dismissed as hollow U.S. pledges in 1995 and 2000 reaffirming its commitment to scrap its nuclear arsenal.

"The U.S. never had any intention of living up to its commitments under Article 6 of the treaty," he said.

In Article 6 of the NPT the five treaty signatories with nuclear weapons -- Russia, the United States, France, Britain and China -- agreed to eventually disarm.

Diversion tactic

Zarif maintains that the U.S. attacks on Iran's nuclear program were merely a "smoke screen to divert attention from its violations" that included U.S. willingness "to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states."

Every five years the 188 members of the NPT meet for a month to review the landmark treaty. The 2005 review ended on Friday without any agreement on how to improve the accord. Many delegates blamed both Washington and Tehran for what they described a failure of the conference to do anything.

Washington lobbied to prevent the conference, which works by consensus, from approving any documents that refer to its 1995 and 2000 pledges to disarm, while Iran blocked anything that referred to it as a proliferation threat and NPT violator.

The only document approved by the conference was one that merely listed the agenda and the participants.

Egypt also worked hard to prevent any substantive conclusion from the conference when it saw it had no chance of focusing criticism on Israel's assumed atomic arsenal.

"Israel is the threat to the region," he said. "It is one of the great ironies of our age that a country outside the framework of legality in the area of non-proliferation is one of the countries that is the most active participants against Iran," he said.

Like atomic-armed India and Pakistan, Israel has never signed the NPT. Though it does not admit nor denies having the bomb, it is estimated that Israel has some 200 nuclear warheads.

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