



Iran Seeks Condemnation of Israeli Nukes

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UNITED NATIONS (AP) - Iran demanded Tuesday that the U.N. Security Council condemn what it said was Israel's clandestine development of nuclear weapons and ``compel" it to place all its nuclear facilities under U.N. inspection.

If Israel refuses to comply, Iran said the council must take ``resolute action" under Chapter 7 of the U.N. Charter which authorizes a range of measures from diplomatic and economic sanctions to military action.

Iran insists its own nuclear program is a purely peaceful effort to develop energy, but the United States and many European nations believe Tehran's real aim in enriching uranium is to produce nuclear weapons. The Security Council is currently debating a resolution that would impose sanctions on Iran for refusing to suspend its enrichment program.

Iran's U.N. Ambassador Javad Zarif said in identical letters to the council and the secretary-general that the council's actions would show whether it was acting under the U.N. Charter or as ``a tool" for a few permanent members who have encouraged Israel ``to persist in its lawless behavior with impunity."

The reference appeared aimed at the United States, Israel's closest ally, which would almost certainly veto any council resolution on Israel's nuclear program.

Zarif said that Israel was the only obstacle to establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East.

Israel has a longstanding policy of ambiguity on nuclear weapons, refusing to confirm or deny whether it has them. But in the German TV interview broadcast Dec. 12, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert listed Israel among countries that possess nuclear weapons.

Olmert's comments - which his office said were misinterpreted - came days after Robert Gates, who took over Monday as

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U.S. defense secretary, said in testimony to a Senate committee that Israel was a member of the club of nuclear-armed nations.

From the Associated Press

Israel's U.N. Mission had no immediate comment on Zarif's letters.

The Iranian ambassador insisted in the letters, obtained by the Associated Press, that Olmert's comments were a clear admission that Israel possessed nuclear weapons in violation of international law, the U.N. Charter and numerous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

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