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## **Iran: Analyst Says Russia Becoming More Critical Of Tehran**

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**Vladimir Orlov, director of the Center for Policy Studies in Moscow, was interviewed by RFE/RL's Radio Farda correspondent Fariba Mavaddat on 12 January about Russian support for Iran's nuclear program and whether that support has changed in recent months.**

**RFE/RL: In the past Russia had always -- if not backed Iran with [its] nuclear programs -- seldom criticized it and on several occasions insisted that Iran's nuclear activities are peaceful. Why [is Russia having a] change of heart now?**

**Orlov:** First of all, I don't see any radical change in [the] Russian position towards Iran because Russia has always expressed a mix of support to [an] Iranian peaceful program and critiques to a [certain] potential [in] Iranian behavior. Russia always has said that "so far we see peaceful intentions by Iran;" that is fine, but because of some problems in the past that Iran...sometimes was a cheater, Russia wants Iran to clearly demonstrate [that] its nuclear program is only of a peaceful nature and, if [that] is not the case, then Russia would revise its own position on Iran. And currently what we see, that, although there is a proposal by Russia to Iran on finding a compromise on [the] enrichment program in Iran. [But] Iran is not willing to accept a compromise solution. In this situation this obviously [poses] a question for Russia herself: why does Iran [behave] in that uncooperative manner? This is why Russia turns from backing Iran to [being] more [critical] because we're having more questions with this uncooperative Iranian behavior.

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**RFE/RL:** But quite apart from the interests of Russia in resuming some enrichment activities on behalf of Iran, Russia has so much interest, too much interest, actually, in Iran to forego them by backing [the] U.S. in [its quest to refer] Iran to the United Nations Security Council.

**Orlov:** Russia has quite a number of interests in Iran, but these are more potential interests rather than current ones. Currently Russia has a few projects which are beneficial, mutually, for Iran and Russia in the economic sphere -- [but] not too many, I would say. It is true that in the future Russia would like to see Iran as an important strategic and economic partner of Russia -- technologically, financially, cooperation in the energy sphere; so we have quite a potentially big agenda. But this agenda is clearly conditional -- and the condition is: Iran develops its nuclear program only in peaceful ways and means. Iran is not going to become a new member of the nuclear weapons club. And because of this condition, now, is somehow [brought into question] by Iranian behavior. This is why Russia would certainly behave [in] a way

to get [a] clear response from Iran on its intentions in [the] nuclear sphere. All the other things, all [the] other issues of cooperation...will be below [this]; [cooperation on the nuclear question] is the first priority.

**RFE/RL:** Washington still has doubts, apparently, that Russia will make good on its word in next month's IAEA meeting. "[The] Washington Post" today has quoted U.S. officials [as] saying that Russia's pledge is only good when the vote takes place inside [the] IAEA. How serious do you think Russia is in backing the U.S.?

**Orlov:** First of all I think that nobody, neither the United States nor Russian European partners like France or Germany or [the] U.K. should put pressure on Russia and should dictate [to] Russia how Russia should behave in [the] Iranian case. Because Russia has her own national interests and in [the] case of fighting proliferation these Russian national interests fully coincide with [the] Americans' and the Europeans' [interests]. In this sense American pressure may be only counterproductive. Without that pressure Russia would probably feel easier to make its independent judgment on the subject, which I believe...[more closely] coincides with American and European views. However when we discuss a very practical step on [the] IAEA when [it] will gather and the Board of Governors will vote on sending [the] Iranian dossier to the Security Council of the United Nations, the questions are more legitimate rather than political. Do we -- [the] international community -- have strong reasons, legal reasons, to pass the Iranian nuclear dossier to the Security Council? If the answer is "yes," and if the answer "yes" is given by such respected people like the director-general of [the] IAEA, Muhammad el-Baradei, if IAEA inspectors tell us that Iran continues to be uncooperative with IAEA, then Russia would find strong reasons to go together with the United States and others to send the issue for very close examination at the [UN] Security Council. However, if IAEA inspectors and [the] IAEA director-general make only general complaints but there is no hard evidence that Iran violated its commitment on the nuclear nonproliferation treaty and commitments [of] its membership at the IAEA, then probably there will be no strong reasons, except for emotional ones, to send the Iranian dossier to the Security Council.