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Iran Demands Patience From West on Nuclear Incentive Offer

By NAZILA FATHI

TEHRAN, July 13 — President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran said in a defiant speech on Thursday that the West should be patient in awaiting his country's response to a package of proposed incentives in return for freezing its nuclear program.

“We have tried to be positive in our examination of the package,” Mr. Ahmadinejad said in his speech in Mianeh, in northwestern Iran, the ISNA student news agency reported. He said again that Iran would announce a decision in late August.

The offer of trade and other incentives to Iran came from the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia — plus Germany. Despite earlier reluctance by Russia and China to seek United Nations Security Council action, the six countries said Wednesday at a meeting in Paris that they would refer the case to the Council. They said Iran had had enough time to respond.

Diplomats had told Iran they wanted a response by Wednesday, but Iran continued to say it needed until late August to evaluate the proposals, which it received in early June.

Mr. Ahmadinejad said Thursday that the Europeans, the main negotiators with Iran on its nuclear program, would bear the consequences if they tried to create tension.

“The Europeans should know that if there are any problems, they are the ones who will suffer,” he said. “We do not want any tension. They should know that they cannot harm our people, and no power can harm our people in any way.”

He does not have final authority to decide if Iran will accept the package. Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has the final say, and Iran's formal response is expected to be made by its chief nuclear negotiator, Ali Larijani.

But Mr. Ahmadinejad's comments were Iran's first reaction to the announcement about seeking Security Council action.

Iran contends that its nuclear program is entirely for peaceful purposes. The United States and Europe say Iran is trying to develop nuclear weapons.

In another speech on Thursday, in Sarab, a northwestern city, Mr. Ahmadinejad accused the United States of trying to stir up the dispute.

“I urge the Americans not to create any problems,” he said. “We and the Europeans will resolve the issue on our own.” He said Iran required more time to study the package.

At a news conference in Tehran on Thursday, Mr. Larijani urged Europe to continue the talks with Iran.

“If some are determined to complicate the process of talks, they are mistaken,” he said, ISNA reported.

He also confirmed reports that Iran had complained to the International Atomic Energy Agency about one of its inspectors, but he said the agency had barred the inspector from Iran. Western diplomats said this week that Iran had barred Chris Charlier, the agency’s section chief for Iran, from coming for several months.

“We made a complaint about the way he worked, and it was the decision of the agency to bar him from coming,” Mr. Larijani said.

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