



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 7, 2010

Adding Refueling to the Fire of U.S.-Iran Tensions

“Airports in Britain, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates have refused to offer fuel to Iranian passenger jets after unilateral sanctions imposed by Washington,” according to a report in the UK Telegraph. “Kuwaiti airports have also declined to offer fuel to Iranian passenger planes.”

The BBC [reports](#) that the British and German governments, plus the Abu Dhabi Airports Company, which manages airports in the UAE, have said that there is no official policy of denying fuel to Iranian airliners.

“But,” says the BBC, “AFP news agency quoted ‘a source close to the aviation sector in the UAE’ as saying there had been a problem with an unnamed international fuel supplier.” That unnamed international fuel supplier, [writes](#) the *Wall Street Journal*, is none other than BP.



The sanctions, says the *Telegraph*, “aim to choke off Iran’s access to imports of refined petroleum products like gasoline and jet fuel and curb its access to the international banking system” in an attempt to force Iran to halt its alleged nuclear-weapons program. Specifically, they “prohibit the sale or provision to Iran of refined petroleum products worth more than \$5 [million] over a year,” writes the *Telegraph*.

It wouldn’t take many jet refuelings to exceed that limit, the penalty for which could be “a ban on doing business in the US,” according to the BBC. Possibly this fact alone explains BP’s compliance, though political calculations (i.e., hoping for favorable treatment from Washington in regard to the Gulf oil spill) or longstanding hostility to the Iranian government (BP played a central role in the CIA’s installment of the Shah in 1953) may play into it as well.

As usual, sanctions hurt ordinary people far more than they hurt governments: Witness the continued U.S. sanctions against Cuba, which have done nothing to remove the Castro regime from power but have assisted the regime in impoverishing the Cuban people and making them resent the Americans.

In the case of the sanctions on Iran, the inability to refuel Iranian passenger planes in foreign countries, at the very least, is doubling the cost of flights out of Iran, an Iranian aviation official told the BBC. At worst, it could “ultimately amount to a blanket ban on all air travel out of the country, at least in so far as the plane doesn’t have enough fuel for a round trip,” [suggests](#) Jason Ditz at Antiwar.com.

This surely harms ordinary Iranians wishing to travel abroad far more than it hurts Iranian government officials, who have the resources and the power to evade the sanctions. Undoubtedly, too, Iranians will blame the United States, and not their own government, for their inability to travel abroad. Some may even become so angry with our government that they will undertake terrorist attacks against



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Americans; the CIA calls such unintended consequences “blowback.”

“Sanctions are literally an act of war,” [said Rep. Ron Paul](#) (R-Texas), explaining on the floor of the House of Representatives his reasons for voting against the sanctions on Iran. “So often well-intentioned foreign policy procedures backfire, they have unintended consequences, and there’s too often blowback,” he later added. Furthermore, he said, “sanctions lead to hostilities. And if you commit to sanctions, you’re really committing to the next step,” which is war.

As if to validate Paul’s point, “Iranian lawmaker Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh said Iran would retaliate,” reports the BBC. “‘Iran will do the same to ships and planes of those countries that cause problems for us,’ Iran’s Isna news agency quoted him as saying.”

How long will it be until a genuine shooting war between the United States and Iran breaks out? Both governments are seemingly itching for one.

What is needed is simple evenhandedness on the part of the United States. If we were to following the wisdom of our nation’s Founders, our government would neither impose sanctions or other harmful policies on foreign countries nor ply them with money or weapons in order to obtain their compliance with Washington’s dictates. We would simply have, in the words of Thomas Jefferson, “peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations; entangling alliances with none.”



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