

[Bush May Sign Nuclear Trade Deal With United Arab Emirates, Leaving It for Obama](#)

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CQ

President Bush is expected as early as this week to sign an agreement that would open nuclear commerce with the United Arab Emirates, the UAE ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency said Wednesday.

If Bush signs the agreement before leaving office, it would be up to President-elect Barack Obama to decide whether to submit it to Congress, where many of his allies have already raised concerns, or risk insulting an Arab ally. The Obama transition team has not indicated whether the president-elect supports the deal.

Hamad Al Kaabi, the UAE permanent representative to the IAEA, said he envisions the agreement, which would allow the two countries to trade nuclear power technology, to serve as the model for peaceful nuclear programs.

“The UAE model of transparency ... will allow the IAEA and the international community to easily access the program, unlike Iran and others, who have not concluded such agreements,” Al Kaabi told reporters.

Section 123 of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 (PL 83-703) requires Congress be given 90 days to approve a nuclear trade deal.

Fears of a Nuclear Arms Race

Henry Sokolski, executive director of the nonpartisan Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, said the problem with the agreement isn't the UAE, it's the fear of an arms race in the Middle East.

“If Iran, as is likely, gets the bomb or gets very close, as is likely, I don't think there will be any peaceful nuclear energy anywhere, much less across the straits in the UAE. Everyone's going to be in trouble,” Sokolski said.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., introduced a bill (HR 364) on Jan. 9 that would prohibit any trade agreement or issuance of nuclear technology export licenses without presidential certification that the UAE has taken significant action to block the transfer of sensitive technology to Iran and enforce U.S. sanctions.

The UAE is hoping that the agreement won't fall victim to the same national security concerns that blocked the 2006 plan to sell port management businesses to UAE-based DP World.

“I think because the relationship [between the United States and the UAE] is so much better understood today than previously, that we won't see that rush to judgment and there will be a thoughtful consideration of the agreement,” said David Scott, director of economic affairs for the Executive Affairs Authority of Abu Dhabi.

