

# Exclusive: Iran to take Parchin military site samples with IAEA present - diplomats

PARIS/UNITED NATIONS | By [John Irish](#) and [Louis Charbonneau](#)



U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang...

Reuters/Joe Klamar/Pool

United Nations inspectors will be present with Iranian technicians as they take samples from a key military site, two Western diplomats said, undercutting an objection by U.S. Republicans to the nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

The diplomats were familiar with details of a confidential arrangement between Iran and the U.N. nuclear watchdog for inspections at the Parchin site, where some countries suspect nuclear weapons-related tests may have taken place.

Iran has denied that allegation, but agreed to accept comprehensive International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA) inspections of its suspect sites as part of the historic July deal in exchange for an easing of international sanctions.

An August report by the Associated Press, in its original version, said the agreement on Parchin suggested that IAEA inspectors would be barred from the site and would have to rely on information and environmental samples provided by Iranian technicians. The AP later published what it said was the text of an early draft of the agreement that remains unconfirmed.

The report was seized on by Republicans in the U.S. Congress as proof that President Barack Obama's administration gave in to Iran on the sensitive issue of inspections to check on Tehran's suspected ambition to build a nuclear bomb.

Iran says its nuclear program is entirely peaceful.

IAEA chief Yukiya Amano rejected the report as "a misrepresentation", though he declined to provide details of what some Republicans described as a "secret side deal" between Iran and the IAEA on Parchin. Amano said on Aug. 20 that the arrangements with Iran were technically sound.

The signed agreement between Iran and the IAEA has not been disclosed publicly.

But the Western diplomats told Reuters that while Iranians would be allowed to take the samples themselves, the agency's inspectors would be physically present and would have full access to their activity.

"There was a compromise so the Iranians could save face and the IAEA could ensure it carried out its inspections according to their strict requirements," said one of the diplomats. Inspections at the Parchin site, which is about 30 km (19 miles) southeast of Tehran, would be carried out by mixed IAEA and Iranian teams coupled with cameras overlooking and recording the process, the other diplomat said.

"The IAEA will be present when the Iranians take the samples (at Parchin). This approach to managed access is something that's fairly standard in the IAEA toolbox. Nothing to worry about really," the diplomat said.

"Unfortunately there have been distortions and inaccuracies in the media that made it look like Iran would simply inspect itself. That's not how it works," the diplomat added.

Neither the IAEA nor Iran's U.N. missions in New York or Vienna had an immediate response to queries about the Parchin inspection arrangement. Reza Najafi, Iran's envoy to the IAEA, said on Thursday that Iran will not permit leaks of details about its arrangements with the IAEA.

## DEAL OPPONENTS SEIZED ON REPORT

Without IAEA confirmation that Iran is keeping promises enshrined in the landmark July 14 nuclear accord, Tehran will not be granted much-needed relief from sanctions.

Under the deal, most sanctions on Iran will be lifted in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program that will remain in place for at least 10 years. According to data given to the IAEA

by some member countries, Iran may have conducted hydrodynamic tests at Parchin in the past to assess how specific materials react under high pressure, such as in a nuclear explosion. The AP story revised its story several times. A corrected, three-paragraph version of the story currently on its web site says that Iran will be allowed to use its own experts to inspect Parchin, with no mention of the IAEA's role.

Republicans repeatedly cited the AP report in recent weeks as they tried to muster enough votes to kill the nuclear deal in Congress. Their efforts effectively failed on Thursday when Senate Democrats blocked a resolution disapproving of the pact, clearing the way for the deal's implementation.

Republican Senator Susan Collins, who was one of very few Republicans some observers thought might support the nuclear deal, referred to the report in her Senate speech this week announcing she would vote against it.

"According to press reports, the Iranians themselves would also be responsible for photographs and environmental sampling of Parchin, a large military installation where nuclear work is suspected to have been conducted and may still be underway," she said.

Republican Senator and presidential candidate Lindsey Graham wrote to Secretary of State John Kerry requesting information on the AP report.

"Allowing the Iranians to inspect their own nuclear sites, particularly a notorious military site, is like allowing the inmates to run the jail," said Graham.

Under a roadmap accord Iran reached with the IAEA alongside the July 14 political agreement, the Islamic Republic is required to give the IAEA enough information about its past nuclear program to allow the Vienna-based watchdog to write a report on the issue by year-end. Iran has long stonewalled an IAEA investigation into the possible military aspects of its past nuclear activities, relating mostly to the period before 2003, saying intelligence spurring the agency's investigation was fabricated. "The IAEA has no fears that its requirements will be met," said the first diplomat. "That's not the issue. The real issue is whether Iran satisfies our concerns by year-end. At the moment they seem to be complying."

(Additional reporting by Shadia Nasralla in Vienna, [Patricia Zengerle](#) in Washington; editing by [Stuart Grudgings](#))

## **Iran says finds unexpectedly high uranium reserve**

DUBAI



The Head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization Ali Akbar Salehi walks through a garden at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel during an extended round of talks in Lausanne, April 2, 2015. Reuters/Brendan Smialowski/Pool

Iran has discovered an unexpectedly high reserve of uranium and will soon begin extracting the radioactive element at a new mine, the head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation said on Saturday.

The comments cast doubt on previous assessments from some Western analysts who said the country had a low supply and would sooner or later would need to import uranium, the raw material needed for its nuclear program.

Any indication Iran could become more self-sufficient will be closely watched by world powers, which reached a landmark deal with Tehran in July over its program. They had feared the nuclear activities were aimed at acquiring the capability to produce atomic weapons - something denied by Tehran.

"I cannot announce (the level of) Iran's uranium mine reserves. The important thing is that before aerial prospecting for uranium ores we were not too optimistic, but the new discoveries

have made us confident about our reserves," Iranian nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA.

Salehi said uranium exploration had covered almost two-thirds of Iran and would be complete in the next four years.

Uranium can be used for civilian power production and scientific purposes, but is also a key ingredient in nuclear weapons.

The July deal between Iran and world powers will lift international sanctions on Iran in exchange for at least a decade of curbs on the country's nuclear activity.

After decades of efforts, Iran - which has consistently said its program is for peaceful purposes - has achieved a full nuclear fuel cycle, ranging from the extraction of uranium ore to enrichment and production of fuel rods for nuclear reactors.

Sanctions on companies taking part in Iran's uranium mining industry will be lifted when the agreement is implemented.

Salehi said uranium extraction was set to begin at a new mine in the central province of Yazd, according to IRNA.

Some Western analysts have previously said that Iran was close to exhausting its supply of yellowcake - or raw uranium - and that mining it domestically was not cost-efficient.

A report published in 2013 by U.S. think-tanks Carnegie Endowment and the Federation of American Scientists said the scarcity and low quality of Iran's uranium resources compelled it "to rely on external sources of natural and processed uranium".

It added: "Despite the Iranian leadership's assertions to the contrary, Iran's estimated uranium endowments are nowhere near sufficient to supply its planned nuclear program."

Iran has repeatedly denied overseas media reports that it has tried to import uranium from countries like Kazakhstan and Zimbabwe.

(Reporting by Bozorgmehr Sharafedin; Editing by Noah Browning and Pravin Char)

## **U.S. 'disturbed' by Iranian leader's criticism after deal**

DUBAI | By Bozorgmehr Sharafedin Nouri



Iranians hold pictures of Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as they celebrate in the street following a nuclear deal with major powers, in Tehran July 14, 2015.  
Reuters/TIMA

The United States said on Tuesday it was disturbed by anti-U.S. hostility voiced by Iran's top leader after a nuclear deal, as both countries' top diplomats sought to calm opposition to the accord from hardliners at home.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said a speech by Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on Saturday vowing to defy American policies in the region despite a deal with world powers over Tehran's nuclear program was "very troubling".

"I don't know how to interpret it at this point in time, except to take it at face value, that that's his policy," he said in the interview with Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television.

"But I do know that often comments are made publicly and things can evolve that are different. If it is the policy, it's very disturbing, it's very troubling," he added.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the highest authority in Iran, told supporters on Saturday that U.S. policies in the region were "180 degrees" opposed to Iran's, in a Tehran speech punctuated by chants of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel".

Under the accord reached in Vienna last week, Iran will be subjected to long-term curbs on its nuclear program in return for the lifting of U.S., European Union and U.N. sanctions. The deal was signed by the United States, Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the EU.

It was a major policy achievement for both U.S. President Barack Obama and Iran's pragmatic elected President Hassan Rouhani. But both leaders have to sell it at home to powerful hardliners in countries that have been enemies for decades, referring to each other as the "Great Satan" and a member of the "Axis of Evil".

In the case of Iran, the deal must win final acceptance from the National Security Council and ultimately Khamenei, who has so far withheld final judgment, thanking the negotiators while saying the text must still be scrutinized and approved.

In the United States, Republicans who control Congress have lined up against the deal, but Obama says he will veto any attempt to block it.

Kerry also has the task of selling the agreement to skeptical U.S. allies in the region. Israel is implacably opposed, and Arab allies of the United States such as Saudi Arabia, ruled by Sunni Muslims, are suspicious of an arrangement that would benefit their Shi'ite, non-Arab rival Iran, which they accuse of fomenting sectarian conflict.

The Secretary General of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council of regional Arab states, Abdullatif al-Zayani, said Khamenei's speech demonstrated "Iran's continued interference in the internal affairs of some Arab countries".

"Those statements don't help to build confidence for cooperative relations based on the principles of good neighborliness (and) non-interference in internal affairs," Zayani, a Bahraini general, was quoted as saying by Saudi news agency SPA.

Dore Gold, director-general of the Israeli foreign ministry, described Israel's opposition to the accord as a "major disagreement" with Washington over "a central pillar of foreign policy", but nonetheless sought to play down the rift with Israel's closest ally.

"All you can do in these situations is just tell your story, tell the truth," he said, adding that the rift should be handled "in a very careful way" and with "mutual respect".

## ZARIF DEFENDS DEAL

Hatred of the United States has been one of the underlying tenets of the Iranian ruling system since the 1979 Islamic revolution. But Iran's nearly 80 million people voted overwhelmingly for Rouhani in 2013 on a promise to end the country's diplomatic isolation.

Mohammad Javad Zarif, the foreign minister who developed a warm rapport with Kerry during weeks of unprecedented face-to-face talks, defended the deal in Iran's hardliner-dominated parliament. He said most of Iran's conditions had been met, including so-called "red lines" set

by Khamenei.

“We don’t say the deal is totally in favor of Iran. Any negotiation is a give and take. We have definitely shown some flexibility,” the foreign minister said. “I tell you as I told the Supreme Leader, we did our best to preserve most of the red lines, if not all.”

Iran's Revolutionary Guards and other hardliners have started to attack the deal directly, criticizing a U.N. Security Council resolution passed on Monday endorsing it.

They may be trying to persuade Khamenei to block the deal by presenting it as having violated the "red lines" he set, particularly by leaving in place for several years a U.N. arms embargo and restrictions on Iran's missile program.

Zarif told lawmakers the U.N. resolution restricted only missiles designed to carry nuclear warheads, which would not affect Iran's conventional missile program.

Revolutionary Guard chief Mohammad Ali Jafari said on Monday, according to Tasnim news agency: "Some parts of the (resolution) draft have clearly crossed the Islamic republic's red lines, especially towards Iran's military capabilities."

Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Khamenei on foreign affairs, broke a long silence on Tuesday and said the deal was "not without flaws", although he did not reject it outright.

“No one can tell us which weapons we can have.... Except nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, Iran will continue making all the missiles, fighter jets, anti-missile defense systems, tanks and other armored equipment it needs,” he was quoted as saying on the Supreme Leader’s website.

## BUSINESS AS USUAL?

The prospect that sanctions will be lifted is spurring businesses to make plans to return to Iran.

In Paris, Laurent Fabius, who next week will make the first trip to Iran by a French foreign minister in 12 years, said having taken a hard line towards Tehran at the nuclear talks would not hurt France's businesses once sanctions are lifted.

"It's true that France was very firm," Fabius told France Inter radio. "Will French firms be penalized? My answer is no because in the past we had an important presence in Iran... You know, in foreign policy, I think you lose nothing in being respected."

French firms such as carmaker Peugeot ([PEUP.PA](#)) and oil major Total ([TOTE.PA](#)) had leading positions in the Iranian market before the United States and European Union imposed tighter sanctions in 2011.

Fabius will travel without an entourage of business leaders, unlike Germany's economy minister, Sigmar Gabriel, who took a large commercial delegation to Iran on Sunday as the first senior Western official to visit after the deal was agreed.

Gabriel's haste drew some domestic criticism: "Our economy minister wanting to explore business opportunities for German companies a few days after the nuclear deal is a dangerous

signal to the region," said Paul Ziemeak, head of the youth wing of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative bloc, during a visit to Israel.

"Our Israeli partners are irritated at how easily the crises and the problematic role of Iran in the region is overlooked."

## Iran, big powers clinch historic nuclear deal

VIENNA | By [Parisa Hafezi](#), [Louis Charbonneau](#), [John Irish](#) and [Arshad Mohammed](#)



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (3rd R), U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz (2nd R) and French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius (R) meet at the Palais Coburg, the venue for nuclear talks in Vienna, Austria July 14, 2015.

Reuters/Joe Klamar/Pool

Iran and six major world powers reached a nuclear deal on Tuesday, capping more than a decade of negotiations with an agreement that could transform the Middle East, and which Israel called an "historic surrender".

Under the deal, sanctions imposed by the United States, European Union and United Nations

would be lifted in return for Iran agreeing long-term curbs on a nuclear program that the West has suspected was aimed at creating a nuclear bomb.

Reaching a deal is a major policy victory for both U.S. President Barack Obama and Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, a pragmatist elected two years ago on a vow to reduce the diplomatic isolation of a country of 77 million people.

But both leaders face scepticism from powerful hardliners at home after decades of enmity between nations that referred to each other as "the Great Satan" and a member of the "axis of evil".

While the main negotiations were between the United States and Iran, the four other U.N. Security Council permanent members Britain, China, France and Russia are also parties to the deal, as is Germany.

"All the hard work has paid off and we sealed a deal. God bless our people," an Iranian diplomat told Reuters on condition of anonymity ahead of the official announcement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called the deal "a bad mistake of historic proportions".

"Iran will get a jackpot, a cash bonanza of hundreds of billions of dollars, which will enable it to continue to pursue its aggression and terror in the region and in the world," he said. "Iran is going to receive a sure path to nuclear weapons."

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely called the deal an "historic surrender". She said on Twitter that Israel would "act with all means to try and stop the agreement being ratified", a clear threat to try to use its influence to block it in the Republican-controlled U.S. Congress.

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Congress has 60 days to review the deal, and if it votes to disapprove of it, Obama can veto the rejection. It would require two thirds of lawmakers to override such a veto, which means some of Obama's fellow Democrats would have to rebel against one of the signature achievements of their president in order to kill the deal.

Final talks in Vienna involved nearly three weeks of talks between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, unprecedented between countries that have been enemies since Iranian revolutionaries stormed the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979 and took 52 Americans hostage.

For Obama, the diplomacy with Iran, begun in secret more than two years ago, ranks alongside his normalization of ties with Cuba as landmarks in a legacy of reaching out to enemies that tormented his predecessors for decades.

Iran's hatred of the United States, a defining trait of its ruling system, was on display only last week, when it marked the end of the Ramadan fasting month with an annual day of protests, with crowds chanting "Death to Israel" and "Death to America".

Iran's IRNA news agency said billions of dollars in frozen funds would be released under the

deal, and sanctions on its central bank, national oil company, shipping and airlines would be lifted. It will retain the right to enrich some uranium, at an amount Western countries say keeps it from stockpiling enough to make a nuclear weapon, which it has always denied is its aim.

## "SNAPBACK MECHANISM" FOR SANCTIONS

Western diplomats said under the final agreement, Iran had accepted a "snapback" mechanism, under which some sanctions could be reinstated in 65 days if it violated the deal. A U.N. weapons embargo would remain in place for five years and a ban on buying missile technology would remain for eight years.

Alongside the deal, the United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, announced an agreement with Iran on a roadmap to resolve its own outstanding issues with Tehran by the end of this year.

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- [› Iran's Zarif, EU say nuclear deal is new chapter of hope](#)
- [› IAEA says agreed roadmap with Iran to resolve nuclear issues by year end](#)

The main deal with the world powers depends on the IAEA being able to inspect Iranian nuclear sites and on Iran answering the watchdog's questions about possible military aims of previous research.

The prospect of an agreement benefiting Iran is a worry to U.S. allies in the Middle East.

Tehran does not recognize Israel and supports its enemies. Arab states ruled by Sunni Muslims, particularly Saudi Arabia, believe that Shi'ite Muslim Iran supports their foes in wars in Syria, Yemen and elsewhere.

But there is also a strong reason for the United States to improve its relations with Iran, as the two countries face a common foe in Islamic State, the Sunni Muslim militant group that has seized swathes of Syria and Iraq.

For Iran, the end of sanctions could bring a rapid economic boom by lifting restrictions that have drastically cut its oil exports and hurt its imports. The prospect of a deal has already helped push down global oil prices because of the possibility that Iranian supply could return to the market.

Oil prices tumbled more than a dollar on Tuesday after the deal was reached.

"Even with an historic deal, oil from Iran will take time to return, and will not be before next year, most likely the second half of 2016," Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at London-based consultancy Energy Aspects, told Reuters. "But given how oversupplied the market is with Saudi output at record highs, the mere prospect of new oil will be bearish for sentiment."

(Additional reporting by Shadia Nasralla; Writing by [Peter Graff](#); editing by Anna Willard and [Peter Millership](#))

# Iran nuclear talks: 'Historic' agreement struck

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Media caption Diplomatic correspondent James Robbins: "After all the months and years of tortured negotiations, it does seem that an agreement has finally been reached"

World powers have reached a deal with Iran on limiting Iranian nuclear activity in return for the lifting of international economic sanctions.

Iran's foreign minister called the agreement "historic", saying it opened a "new chapter of hope".

It reportedly gives UN nuclear inspectors extensive but not automatic access to sites within Iran.

Negotiations between Iran and six world powers - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - began in 2006.

The so-called P5+1 - want Iran to scale back its sensitive nuclear activities to ensure that it cannot build a nuclear weapon.

Iran, which wants crippling international sanctions lifted, has always insisted that its nuclear work is peaceful.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said the deal was "a sign of hope for the entire world".

"It is a decision that can open the way to a new chapter in international relations," she said.

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The text of the deal has not been released but these are some of the details it is believed to contain:

- A compromise over the inspection of sites within Iran, the Associated Press quotes a diplomat as saying - UN inspectors would be allowed to monitor military sites but Iran could challenge requests for access
- Iran has accepted that sanctions could be restored in 65 days if it violates the deal, Reuters cited diplomats as saying
- A UN arms embargo and missile sanctions would remain in place for five and eight years respectively, Reuters reports

## 'Significant step forward'

Separately, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran said they had signed a

roadmap to resolve outstanding issues.

IAEA head Yukiya Amano told reporters in Vienna that his organisation had signed a roadmap "for the clarification of past and present outstanding issues regarding Iran's nuclear programme".

He called the agreement a "significant step forward", saying it would allow the agency to "make an assessment of issues relating to possible military dimensions to Iran's nuclear programme by the end of 2015".

There has been stiff resistance to a deal from conservatives both in Iran and the US.

Israel's government has also warned against an agreement.

Following reports of a deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quoted as saying that Iran would receive a "sure path to nuclear weapons" and "a cash bonanza of hundreds of billions of dollars".

## **Draft nuclear deal calls for access to all Iranian sites: source**

VIENNA | By [Parisa Hafezi](#), [Louis Charbonneau](#), [John Irish](#) and [Arshad Mohammed](#)

U.N. inspectors would have access to all suspect Iranian sites, including military ones, under a draft nuclear deal that six major powers and Iran are working to finalize on Tuesday, a diplomatic source said.

The person, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the U.N. access would be based on consultations between the six powers and Iran under the draft deal, which would impose limits on the Iranian nuclear program in return for economic sanctions relief.

The foreign ministers of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States met for about an hour just after midnight as they struggled to complete the agreement, which has been under negotiation for more than 20 months.

An agreement, if one can be reached, could mark a watershed in Tehran's relations with Western nations, which suspect that Iran has used its civil nuclear program as a cover to develop a nuclear weapons capability. Iran denies this.

A comprehensive meeting between Iran and the powers will be held at 0800 GMT on Tuesday (4.00 a.m. EDT), the semi-official Fars news agency reported. Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, and E.U.'s Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini are expected to read a joint statement.

"Iran and the six powers will hold a comprehensive meeting at the U.N. headquarters in Vienna at 1000 am local time," Fars said.

The possible agreement, sketched out in a preliminary accord on April 2, would limit Iran's nuclear program for more than a decade in exchange for the gradual suspension of economic

sanctions that have slashed Iran's oil exports and crippled its economy.

Among the biggest sticking points in the past week has been Iran's insistence that a United Nations Security Council arms embargo and ban on its ballistic missile program dating from 2006 be lifted immediately if an agreement is reached.

Russia, which sells weapons to Iran, has publicly supported Tehran on the issue.

Western nations are loathe to allow Iran to buy and sell arms freely, fearing this would permit it to increase its military support to Shi'ite militias in Iraq, Houthi militants in Yemen and embattled President Bashar al-Assad in Syria.

Another key stumbling block has been the so-called "snapback" plan to restore the sanctions if Iran violates the deal. It was not clear how those issues would be finessed in any final agreement, although diplomats said they were close to overcoming differences.

Other problematic issues include access for inspectors to military sites in Iran, explanations from Tehran of past activity that might have been aimed at developing a nuclear weapon and the overall speed of sanctions relief.

The diplomatic source said that if the deal is agreed, a U.N. Security Council resolution on it would ideally be adopted in July and steps to be taken by both sides – including Iranian limitations on its nuclear program and relief from sanctions on Iran – would be implemented in the first half of 2016.

The information from the source was preliminary and subject to change because it was based on a draft of the nuclear deal that was not the final version and that could be amended before final approval by Iran and the six powers.

The source said Iran and the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency have agreed on a plan to address outstanding questions about the possible military dimensions of past Iranian nuclear activity by the end of 2015, adding that some sanctions relief would be conditioned on Tehran resolving this issue.

The plan agreed by the IAEA and Iran includes one visit to the Parchin military site as well as possible interviews with Iranian nuclear scientists, the source noted.

The marathon nuclear negotiations, which have been going for more than two weeks in Vienna, missed a midnight deadline on Monday to reach a final deal, but diplomats from all sides said they hoped for a breakthrough in the coming hours.

(Additional Reporting by Shadia Nasralla; Editing by [Ken Wills](#))

## **IAEA says Iran uranium stockpile reduced, but questions remain**

## VIENNA

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (3rdL), flanked by National Security Council Senior Director for Iran, Iraq, Syria and the Gulf States Robert Malley (L), U.S. Energy Secretary Dr. Ernest Moniz (2ndL, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman (4thL),... Reuters/State Department/Handout

Iran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium gas dropped below the maximum level required under a 2013 interim nuclear agreement with world powers, a U.N. report showed, but a U.S. think-tank suggested Tehran had not entirely met its obligations.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in its monthly report on Iran, a confidential document seen by Reuters on Wednesday, that Iran's stockpile of uranium gas enriched up to a fissile purity of 5 percent was at 7,537 kg at end-June - below a roughly 7,650 kg ceiling stipulated in the November 2013 interim nuclear deal with six world powers.

A U.S.-based think-tank, however, issued an analysis of the IAEA report that questioned whether Iran had indeed complied with the requirement to convert its low enriched uranium (LEU) to a form with less risk of proliferation, uranium dioxide.

"The IAEA's recent report on the implementation of (the interim deal) shows that only 9 percent of Iran's stockpile of newly produced LEU hexafluoride has actually been converted into uranium dioxide form," the Institute for Science and International Security said in a press release.

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"When it became clear that Iran could not meet its commitment to convert the LEU into uranium dioxide, the United States revised its criteria for Iran meeting its obligations," the institute said, adding that the LEU had apparently been converted into a form different from uranium dioxide.

"Iran had two requirements under the (interim deal): to end the time period with the same amount of UF<sub>6</sub> they began it with, and to convert any excess UF<sub>6</sub> produced into an oxide form. They've done both," a senior U.S. official told Reuters.

The IAEA did not have an immediate response to a query about its report.

## Iranians celebrate, Obama hails 'historic' nuclear framework

LAUSANNE, Switzerland | By [Louis Charbonneau](#) and [Stephanie Nebehay](#)

(Reuters) - Iranians celebrated in the streets after negotiators reached a framework for a nuclear accord and U.S. President Barack Obama hailed an "historic understanding", but senior global diplomats cautioned that hard work lies ahead to strike a final deal.

The tentative agreement, struck on Thursday after eight days of talks in Switzerland, clears the

way for a settlement to allay Western fears that Iran could build an atomic bomb, with economic sanctions on Tehran being lifted in return.

It marks the most significant step toward rapprochement between Washington and Tehran since the 1979 Iranian revolution and could bring an end to decades of Iran's international isolation.

But the deal still requires experts to work out difficult details before a self-imposed June deadline and diplomats said it could collapse at any time before then.



U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry looks out of his room at the Beau Rivage Palace Hotel during a break during the Iran nuclear program talks in Lausanne April 1, 2015. REUTERS/Ruben Sprich

16 March 2015 Last updated at 04:59

## Iran deal could start nuclear fuel race - Saudi Arabia

By Barbara Plett Usher BBC News, Riyadh



Prince Turki al-Faisal says Iran is a "disruptive player" in the Arab world

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A senior member of the Saudi royal family has warned that a deal on Iran's nuclear programme could prompt other regional states to develop atomic fuel.

Prince Turki al-Faisal told the BBC that Saudi Arabia would then seek the same right, as would other nations.

Six world powers are negotiating an agreement aimed at limiting Iran's nuclear activity but not ending it.

Critics have argued this would trigger a nuclear arms race in the region spurred on by Saudi-Iran rivalry.

"I've always said whatever comes out of these talks, we will want the same," said the prince, Saudi Arabia's former intelligence chief.

"So if Iran has the ability to enrich uranium to whatever level, it's not just Saudi Arabia that's going to ask for that.

"The whole world will be an open door to go that route without any inhibition, and that's my main objection to this P5+1 [the six world powers] process."



Iran insists its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes  
With a late March deadline for an Iran deal approaching, Saudi Arabia last week signed a nuclear co-operation agreement with South Korea that included a plan to study the feasibility of building two nuclear reactors in the kingdom.

Riyadh has also signed nuclear co-operation agreements with China, France and Argentina, and

intends to construct 16 nuclear power reactors over the next 20 years.

The US Secretary of State, John Kerry, [flew to Riyadh earlier this month](#) to reassure Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab allies that America would not accept any deal unless it prevented Iran from building a nuclear weapon.

He was told that they found Iran's support for armed Shia Muslim groups in regional conflicts as troubling as the prospect of an atomic bomb.

"Iran is already a disruptive player in various scenes in the Arab world, whether it's Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, or Bahrain," said Prince Turki.

"So ending fear of developing weapons of mass destruction is not going to be the end of the troubles we're having with Iran."

Of most concern to Saudi Arabia is Iran's backing of Iraqi Shia militias in the fight against Islamic State (IS) militants.

That role has become more public during the battle over the Iraqi city of Tikrit, with General Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force, stepping out of the shadows to openly guide Shia forces.

"Now it seems that Iran is expanding its occupation of Iraq and that is unacceptable," said Prince Turki.

The Americans are trying to keep a delicate balance, recognising that the US and Iran share common cause, if not co-ordinated action, against IS.



Iran and six international powers aim to reach a framework agreement in March and a final deal by 30 June

The US military's top officer, Gen Martin Dempsey, has said that Iran's help in the Tikrit offensive could be "a positive thing" providing it does not fuel sectarianism.

But on a recent visit to Baghdad he expressed concern that Iraq's Shia political leaders were not taking promised action to bridge the sectarian divide with Sunni Muslim Arab tribes, and warned this could strain the anti-IS coalition of which Saudi Arabia is a member.

Riyadh has also long been frustrated with America's refusal to arm the Syrians against the government of President Bashar al-Assad, Iran's closest Arab ally.

So it has agreed to participate in a US-led programme to train and arm Syrian rebels even though the focus would be fighting IS, not Assad.

"Inevitably I believe fighting Isis [IS], or Fahash as I prefer to call it, is fighting Assad," Prince Turki declared, using an Arabic word for obscene.

"It's because of Assad's treatment of his people that Fahash has taken advantage of the situation... so the enemy is both Fahash and Bashar al-Assad," the former Saudi intelligence chief added.

# Iran nuclear deal: Obama says US partisanship gone too far

3 hours ago

**US President Barack Obama has said that partisanship over the Iran nuclear deal has gone too far.**

He rebuked the stance of some Republicans in the US Congress.

Some Republicans have argued against the deal, saying that Iran has received too many concessions. An outline agreement on the future shape of Iran's nuclear programme was reached after marathon talks with six major powers earlier in April.

## Partisan wrangling

The deal aims to prevent Tehran making a nuclear weapon in exchange for phased sanction relief. A deadline has been set for 30 June to reach a comprehensive pact. Tough negotiations still lie ahead.

President Obama, speaking after a regional conference in Panama, said he remained "absolutely positive" that the deal was the surest way to prevent Iran obtaining nuclear arms,

Earlier, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said that a final agreement must result in an immediate end to all sanctions.

President Obama said on Saturday that Mr Khamenei was simply addressing his own country's internal politics.



Mr Khamenei also said the details of any final deal would be crucial

"Even a guy with the title 'Supreme Leader' has to be concerned about his own constituencies," he said.

"There may be ways of structuring a final deal that satisfy their pride, their optics, their politics, but meet our core practical objectives."

Mr Obama went on to criticise the attitudes of some Republican senators who have been highly sceptical about the emerging agreement with Iran.

## 'Anticipating failure'

Last week, Senator John McCain said that US Secretary of State John Kerry's explanations of the agreement were less trustworthy than those of Iran's supreme leader.

Mr Obama said that entrenched partisanship was no way to run foreign policy.

"I don't understand why it is that everybody's working so hard to anticipate failure," he said.

The framework agreement was announced by the European Union and Iran after eight days of negotiations in Switzerland.

The talks at Lausanne's Beau-Rivage Palace hotel between Iran and the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK,

France, China and Russia plus Germany - continued beyond the original, self-imposed deadline of 31 March.

The outline agreement has been criticised by members of Congress who want US lawmakers to have the right to review any final deal.

## Iran nuclear deal poses scientific challenges

**From predictions of nuclear ‘break-out’ to monitoring for ‘sneak-out’, scientific expertise is central to the success of the preliminary accord.**

**Declan Butler**

09 April 2015

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*Behrouz Mehri/AFP/Getty*

An inspector from the International Atomic Energy Agency works at the Isfahan Uranium Conversion Facilities in Iran back in 2005.

The nuclear agreement thrashed out between Iran and six world powers last week represents a landmark piece of diplomacy, with science at its heart.

The 'framework' deal is designed to ensure that Iran's nuclear programme is used for peaceful means. In exchange, the country will obtain some relief from sanctions that have crippled its economy. The result of eight days of intense negotiation in Lausanne, Switzerland, the deal is still preliminary and does not exist in written form, though it has been outlined in a document released by the United States. On 6 April, 30 leading nuclear-security experts, mostly from the US, voiced

support for the accord. However, crucial details and issues must still be resolved before 30 June, the deadline for reaching a final, written agreement.

Much as US and Soviet leaders relied on physicists to work out nuclear-weapons reductions and reliable verification procedures during the cold war, those negotiating the Iran deal are looking to scientists for confidence in its technical underpinnings. Here are three nuclear capabilities that a written agreement will need to address, ranked in increasing order of difficulty.

## **Break-out**

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Driving last week's negotiations was the long-standing concern that Iran could quickly divert its nuclear programme — which it claims is for civilian and peaceful purposes — to produce the highly enriched uranium or weapons-grade plutonium needed to build a bomb, a process known as 'break-out'.

Complex calculations that take account of the number of centrifuges, the rate of uranium enrichment, the size of the existing enriched-uranium stockpiles and their level of enrichment are behind the stipulation in the preliminary deal that Iran reduce the number of operating centrifuges from 19,000 to 5,060 and its stockpile of low-enriched uranium from 10,000 kg to 300 kg (the rest of the stockpile must be blended down or sent overseas). This combination of figures

means it would take Iran at least a year from breakout to produce enough fissile material for a bomb, leaving time for international intervention.

The framework deal also says that Fordow, one of Iran's two confirmed enrichment plants, which is located deep under a mountain, be barred from processing uranium altogether. On 6 April, Ernest Moniz, the US secretary of energy and a physicist, added that any centrifuges to be left at the plant would be repurposed to produce medical isotopes as part of an international centre that would also be dedicated to experimental physics research.

Enriched uranium is not Iran's only pathway to an atomic bomb: a heavy-water nuclear reactor at Arak contains plutonium in its spent fuel — although it is thought that Iran does not yet have the means to separate out and purify the element. Under the framework agreement, the reactor core would be replaced with one that generates much less plutonium, with all spent fuel sent out of the country.

### **Sneak-out**

Assuming that these details can be formally agreed on, the next problem will be to ensure that Iran complies with the restrictions imposed on it.

Under the framework agreement, for the next 25 years the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), headquartered in Vienna, would be given unprecedented powers to access and inspect at short notice any part of Iran's fuel cycle, from uranium mines to reactors, and to continuously monitor enrichment facilities. Importantly, the agency would be given powers to investigate any undeclared sites

suspected of carrying out uranium enrichment or other nuclear activities that could allow nuclear material to be secretly diverted to make nuclear weapons — a scenario known as ‘sneak-out’.

The agency’s inspections would include the use of satellite imagery, on-site searches for specialized equipment, analysing documents, interviewing people, and carrying out environmental sampling to check, for example, whether highly enriched uranium has been used at a site. The inspection team could also use ground-penetrating radar to search for hidden equipment.

The proposal is much less detailed when it comes to preventing sneak-out, and Iran has in the past repeatedly hidden enrichment plants and other nuclear facilities from the IAEA, and has often been uncooperative about inspections.

There is also the issue of how the IAEA would monitor Iran’s nuclear programme once restrictions on it are lifted, since the accord stipulates that restrictions on centrifuges must be binding for 10 years, those on the stockpile for 15 years and those on new heavy-water reactors for 15 years. Other signatories to the 1970 nuclear non-proliferation treaty, including Japan and Brazil, have large domestic enrichment programmes, which are subject to IAEA safeguards and inspections. The accord would postpone for more than a decade any decisions about what enrichment capacities Iran might ultimately be allowed.

### **Weapons research**

Perhaps the thorniest issue left to be resolved is what military nuclear research Iran has carried out in the past and what, if any, might still be going on. Such research could include the testing of nuclear-weapons

components such as detonators, the development of a nuclear payload for missiles, and modelling weapon behaviour.

On this, the preliminary deal is vague, stating only that: “Iran will implement an agreed set of measures to address the IAEA’s concerns regarding the Possible Military Dimensions (PMD) of its program.”

If inspectors had access to the Parchin site, where work on the development of nuclear weapons is alleged to have taken place, they could look for evidence of past military nuclear research. Such detective work relies heavily on scientific and technical expertise in nuclear-weapons engineering. Only with such expertise would it be possible to tell, for example, whether the details obtained of tests on missile payload ruled out any use other than for a nuclear weapon, or whether high-explosive testing of materials was related to trying to predict how a nuclear weapon design might perform.

But the deal as laid out does not touch on what powers the IAEA would have to inspect military sites, and Iran has previously refused the IAEA access to Parchin.

Complicating matters is evidence that Iran has tried to conceal previous nuclear-weapons-related research at the site from any eventual IAEA inspection. For example, in February, the Institute for Science and International Security, a non-profit, non-partisan nuclear watchdog based in Washington DC, [published satellite images of the site showing extensive demolition and reconstruction](#) and the disturbance of earth, suggesting that the country might have been trying to cover up evidence in the event of an inspection.

# Iran nuclear talks: Rouhani vows to abide by deal

32 minutes ago

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**Middle East**

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Media caption

Iranian President Rouhani: "This is the first step"

## Iran nuclear crisis

**A result which buys  
time**

**Iran nuclear crisis: Six key  
points**

**Sense of  
history at  
Iran talks**

		<b>How Irani ans see the nucl ear talk s</b>
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**Iran's president has vowed it will abide by the terms of the preliminary nuclear agreement it signed with six world powers, so long as they do too.**

"The world must know that we do not intend to cheat," Hassan Rouhani said in a televised address to the nation.

But Mr Rouhani warned that Iran would have other options if world powers "one day decide to follow a different path".

The framework deal signed on Thursday will see Iran curb nuclear activities in return for relief from sanctions.

Earlier Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that it posed a grave danger to the region, in particular his own country.

He said any compressive accord, due before 30 June, had to include a "clear and unambiguous Iranian recognition of Israel's right to exist".

But the White House said the US would not sign an agreement over Iran's nuclear programme that would threaten Israel.

White House spokesman Eric Shultz also announced that President Barack Obama would on Friday discuss the framework agreement with Congressional leaders, some of whom have been very sceptical of a deal.

### 'Third way'

President Rouhani reiterated that Iran's nuclear programme was peaceful.



Mr Rouhani said the deal showed Iran "can have co-operation with the world"

The country was "not two-faced", he said, and would honour any final deal provided the P5+1 - the US, UK, France, Russia, China and Germany - did the same.

"If the other side acts on its promises, Iran will abide by its promises. If, however, they one day decide to follow a different path, our nation too will be always free to make [another] choice."

Mr Rouhani also stressed that the world now accepted Iran had the right to enrich uranium on its own soil, and that enrichment was not a threat to anyone.

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## Analysis: Lyse Doucet, BBC News, Lausanne

There's been celebration through the night across Iran and a hero's welcome for Foreign Minister Javad Zarif. But the deal he's brought home has been dismissed by hardliners who say Iran surrendered too much in exchange for too little.

John Kerry also faces a mix of support and scepticism in the US Congress. The loudest condemnation has come from Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu, who insists this deal doesn't block but helps Iran build a nuclear bomb.

As hard as it was to reach this preliminary agreement, it will be even harder to draft a final deal by the end of June. But, if negotiators do it, it will be a victory for diplomacy which, they believe will make the world a much safer place.

# Iran nuclear talks: 'Framework' deal agreed

23 minutes ago

Media caption

Barack Obama on Iran deal: "We will be able to resolve one of the greatest threats to our security and to do so peacefully"

**An outline agreement on the future shape of Iran's nuclear programme has been reached after marathon talks with six major powers in Switzerland.**

Under the deal, Iran will reduce its enrichment capacity in exchange for phased sanctions relief.

US President Barack Obama said a "historic understanding" had been reached with Iran.

The world powers and Iran now aim to draft a comprehensive nuclear accord by 30 June.

The framework agreement was announced by the European Union and Iran after eight days of negotiations in Lausanne.

The talks between the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - and Iran at Lausanne's Beau-Rivage Palace hotel continued beyond the original self-imposed deadline of 31 March.

Iran denies Western claims it is trying to build a

nuclear weapon. It entered negotiations in order to see sanctions lifted.

## 'Unprecedented verification'

**According to the US**, the outline deal includes the following conditions:

Iran will reduce its stored centrifuges by two-thirds and reduce its stockpile of low-enriched uranium

Iran's excess centrifuges and nuclear enrichment infrastructure will be placed in storage, monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

All of Iran's nuclear facilities will be subject to regular IAEA inspections

Iran will redesign its heavy water reactor in Arak so that it cannot produce weapons-grade plutonium

US and EU sanctions related to Iran's nuclear programme will be lifted in phases, but can be brought back if Iran doesn't meet its obligations.

Mr Obama said the deal's implementation would be closely watched. "If Iran cheats, the world will know it," he said, adding that the deal was based not on trust but on "unprecedented verification".

He said the framework agreement had come after "months of tough, principled diplomacy", and that it was "a good deal".

The joint EU-Iran statement said work could now start on a "comprehensive deal" to limit Iran's nuclear programme

## 'Big day'

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini, speaking at a news conference alongside Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif after agreement was reached, said a "decisive step" had been achieved.

"We have reached solutions on key parameters of a joint comprehensive plan of action," she said.

Negotiators would now start "drafting the text" of the plan "guided by the solutions", Ms Mogherini added.

News that a deal had been agreed emerged on Twitter, before the official news conference.

In a tweet, Mr Zarif said: "Found solutions, ready to start drafting immediately."

Also on Twitter, Germany's foreign ministry said: "Agreement for framework on final agreement reached."

And US Secretary of State John Kerry tweeted: "Big day... Back to work soon on final deal."

But Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu also took to Twitter to declare: "Any deal must significantly roll back Iran's nuclear capabilities and stop its terrorism and aggression."

# Iran nuclear deal: Kerry extends stay as talks overrun

23 minutes ago

From the section  
**Middle East**



The talks at Lausanne's Beau-Rivage Palace hotel will be extended to Thursday

**Talks on Iran's nuclear programme will continue until at least Thursday morning, two days after the original deadline, the US says.**

US Secretary of State John Kerry has extended his stay to continue negotiations, officials say.

However, a number of foreign ministers have left the

talks and China warned compromise was essential, otherwise "all previous efforts will be wasted".

A deal would curb the nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief.

Negotiations between the so-called P5+1 - the US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany - and Iran continued on Wednesday at Lausanne's Beau-Rivage Palace hotel after overrunning the self-imposed deadline of 31 March to reach a deal.

On Wednesday evening, a US state department spokeswoman said: "We continue to make progress, but have not reached a political understanding.

Therefore, Secretary Kerry will remain in Lausanne until at least Thursday morning to continue the negotiations."

The P5+1 deal seeks to ensure Iran could not assemble a nuclear weapon in less than a year. The Iranians insist that they have no such ambition.

### **'Fingers crossed'**

Earlier, UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond told the BBC: "I think we have a broad framework of understanding, but there are still some key issues that have to be worked through.

"Some of them are quite detailed and technical so there is still quite a lot of work to do but we are on it now and we'll keep going at it.

Mr Hammond stressed again that he would not sign

up to a "bad deal".

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Media caption

UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said there is still a lot of work to be done



Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said earlier he hoped an agreement could be finalised on Wednesday



President Obama was briefed about the talks late on Tuesday

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier that "one can say with relative certainty that we at the minister level have reached an agreement in principle on all key aspects of the final settlement of this issue". He has now left the talks.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that "quite a bit" had been accomplished.

He and Mr Kerry held bilateral talks on Wednesday.

However, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi on Wednesday admitted that "problems" remained, saying there could not be a deal without a "framework for the removal of all sanctions".

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Media caption

The BBC looks at how hard it is to actually build a nuclear bomb?

The BBC's Barbara Plett Usher in Lausanne says Mr Araqchi suggested there might be a joint press statement that talks about progress made and continuing to try to draft a solution.

This sounds less than the framework on political parameters which the negotiators had been targeting, our correspondent says.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who has now left Lausanne, issued a note of caution.

A Chinese statement read: "It is important to give political guidance to the negotiations... it is important to narrow down the differences.

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## Analysis: Barbara Plett Usher, BBC State Department Correspondent

This is a fluid situation, with little information leaking out of the talks and expectations veering between an imminent deal or none at all.

All negotiators keep saying there has been progress, but not enough yet for an agreement.

The key sticking points are well known: the limits on Iran's freedom to conduct advanced nuclear research and a framework for lifting UN sanctions. These are more complicated than US and European economic sanctions, because they directly target Iran's nuclear programme and would be more difficult to re-impose once lifted.

But the main difficulty might be the competing approaches of the two main negotiators, the Americans and the Iranians.

The Obama administration needs as much detail as possible in this preliminary accord to counter opponents in Congress. The Iranians want as little as possible to keep critics quiet while they focus on getting a final comprehensive settlement.

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"If the negotiations are stuck, all previous efforts will be wasted. All parties must be prepared to meet each other half way to reach an agreement."

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius has also left Lausanne but said he would return as soon as it was "useful".

Any agreement would set the stage for further talks aimed at achieving a comprehensive accord by 30 June.

On Wednesday, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu said again that the concessions offered to Iran in Lausanne would ensure a "bad deal" that endangered Israel, the Middle East and the rest of the world.

## Sticking points

After months of negotiations, the basic outline of an agreement is well known.

Iran would scale its nuclear programme and subject it to rigorous inspection for at least 10 years. In exchange, there would be an easing and eventual end of crippling UN, US and EU sanctions.

However, there are some issues yet to be resolved.

These are thought to include:

**Length of restrictions** - Iran's nuclear activities would be strictly limited for at least 10 years. After that, Iran wants all limits to be lifted. The P5+1 says they should be removed

progressively over the following five years  
**Sanctions relief** - Iran wants the UN sanctions suspended soon after an agreement. The P5+1 says they should be eased in a phased manner, with restrictions on imports of nuclear-related technology remaining for years

**Non-compliance** - The US and its European allies want a mechanism that would allow suspended UN sanctions to be put back into effect rapidly if Iran reneges on a deal. Russia reportedly accepts this, but wants to ensure its Security Council veto rights are protected

**Centrifuges** - Iran wants to develop advanced centrifuges that can enrich uranium faster and in greater quantities

# Iran nuclear talks: World powers seek deal in Lausanne

1 hour ago

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[Middle East](#)



John Kerry (left) has had bilateral talks with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif (right) and is staying in Lausanne until the talks conclude

**Representatives of six world powers are intensifying talks with Iran on its nuclear programme, ahead of a 31 March deadline for a deal.**

The US secretary of state and German and French foreign ministers have all cancelled their travel plans in a final push for an agreement.

Representatives from China, Russia and the UK are also at the negotiations.

US officials say all parties have agreed to a "step by step approach" to the deal, but sticking points remain.

The world powers, known as the P5+1 group - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council

plus Germany - want to ensure that Iran cannot develop nuclear weapons.

Iran denies it is aiming to build nuclear weapons and is hoping that a deal will lead to the lifting of international sanctions.

## Iran 'optimistic'

The talks are taking place in the Swiss city of Lausanne, with world powers meeting Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

US officials said all parties, including Iran, had agreed "there needs to be a phased step by step reciprocal approach", so that Iran's steps to scale back its nuclear programme are met with a phased lifting of sanctions.

Two core issues remained on the table, they said. One was how the sanctions on Iran would be lifted; the other was what would happen in later years of the agreement, including Iran's capacity to conduct nuclear research and development.

"We've put ideas on the table but we haven't found the right combination yet, but no one's given up," the officials said.

Meanwhile, senior Iranian negotiator Abbas Araqchi said his side was "optimistic, the chances of getting a deal are there."

However, he added that that talks were "in their final phase and very difficult", and ruled out sending the

country's nuclear stocks abroad - one of the steps demanded by the P5+1.



German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (left) was joined by his French and Chinese counterparts, Laurent Fabius (centre) and Wang Yi (second from right)

UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said: "We're here because we believe a deal can be done, it's in everybody's interest that a deal does get done. But it has to be a deal which puts the bomb beyond Iran's reach. There can't be any compromise about that."

US Secretary of State John Kerry cancelled a planned return to the US to attend an event honouring his late Senate colleague Edward Kennedy, to ensure he could attend Sunday's talks, the state department said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier

and his French counterpart Laurent Fabius also delayed a planned trip to Kazakhstan in order to focus on the negotiations.

They were joined by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Mr Hammond.

**At the scene: Lyse Doucet, BBC News, Lausanne**

Negotiators are close, closer than ever before, in their 12-year stand-off over Iran's nuclear programme. But a deal is still not done, and no-one can say with 100% certainty if it will be.

With each day that slips by before an end-of-March deadline for a framework agreement, the political temperature rises against the serene backdrop of the snow-capped Swiss Alps. As foreign ministers and officials stream in and out of meetings in the gilded Beau Rivage, snippets and statements to the persistent press play into 11th-hour brinkmanship. The last difficult details are as much about political power as they are about nuclear energy. Both Iran and world powers urge the other side to make tough decisions. All say they've come here, hoping to make a deal, to make history.

Beyond this rarefied world, sceptics wait in many capitals, ready to react if, in their view, a bad deal emerges. Reaching what counts as a "good deal" for all will go right down to the wire and, possibly,

beyond.

Potential sticking points in the nuclear talks are thought to include how long the deal will last and how much of Iran's nuclear facilities will be open to inspection.

Meanwhile, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has again warned of a deal with Iran, describing it as worse than his country had feared. On Sunday he told a cabinet meeting "this deal, as it appears to be emerging, bears out all our fears, and even more than that".

He gave no details, but noting advances by Iran-backed forces in Yemen and other Arab countries, he accused Iran of trying to "conquer the Middle East" while pursuing nuclearisation.

"The Iran-Lausanne-Yemen axis is very dangerous to humanity and must be stopped," he said.

# Iran's nuclear facilities



Source: New Scientist/ Global Security