

# Trump Seeks Way to Declare Iran in Violation of Nuclear Deal

By DAVID E. SANGER/JULY 27, 2017

Is the U.S. Trying to Kill the Iran Nuclear Deal?

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000005317472/us-iran-nuclear-deal-sanctions.html?action=click&gtype=vhs&version=vhs-heading&module=vhs&region=title-area>

In July, President Trump reluctantly agreed to confirm that Iran is complying with the terms of the nuclear agreement. But now, analysts say he is actively looking for ways to get the United States out of the deal. By NILO TABRIZY on

President Trump, frustrated that his national security aides have not given him any options on how the United States can leave the [Iran](#) nuclear deal, has instructed them to find a rationale for declaring that the country is violating the terms of the accord.

American officials have already told allies they should be prepared to join in reopening negotiations with Iran or expect that the United States may abandon the agreement, as it did the Paris climate accord. And according to several foreign officials, the United States has begun raising with international inspectors in Vienna the possibility of demanding access to military sites in Iran where there is reasonable suspicion of nuclear research or development.

If the Iranians balk, as seems likely, their refusal could enable Washington to declare Tehran in violation of the two-year-old deal.

Mr. Trump has enormous latitude to abandon the accord. It was never a treaty because President Barack Obama knew that opposition to the agreement in the Republican-dominated Senate was so great that he could never get the two-thirds majority needed for ratification. Instead, he made an executive agreement, one that his successor could eliminate by merely disregarding the accord's requirement to waive sanctions against Iran.

Mr. Trump's instructions followed a sharp series of exchanges last week with Secretary of State [Rex W. Tillerson](#), after Mr. Trump initially balked at certifying, for a second time since he took office, that Iran is in compliance with the agreement. He later [reluctantly approved the certification](#).

Mr. Trump had expected to be presented with options for how to get out of the deal, according to two officials, and in the words of one of them, "he had a bit of a meltdown when that wasn't one of the choices."

Mr. Trump himself made it clear he does not plan to let that happen again.

"We're doing very detailed studies," [he told The Wall Street Journal](#) in an interview this week. Later, he added that when the next 90-day review of the deal comes around — mandated by Congress two years ago — "I think they'll be noncompliant."

His aides say they are not so sure of the outcome, and they described the studies Mr. Trump referred to as evenhanded efforts to evaluate the costs and benefits of staying inside the deal — with its sharp limitations on Iran's ability to produce nuclear fuel for at least the next nine years — versus abandoning it.

Some concede that the diplomatic cost of abandoning the agreement would be high. The other parties to the agreement — Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia — do not share Mr. Trump's objections. If the United States withdraws support for the accord, it will be isolated on the issue, much as it is on the climate change agreement.

But the president's mind seems made up. "Look, I have a lot of respect for Rex and his people, good relationship," he said of Mr. Tillerson. "It's easier to say they comply. It's a lot easier. But it's the wrong thing. They don't comply."

Even longtime critics of the deal in Congress have their doubts about the wisdom of abandoning it. In [an interview this week](#) with David Ignatius of The Washington Post, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Bob Corker, Republican of Tennessee, strongly suggested that this is not the moment to abandon something that is largely working.

"What I say to the president, and this is what Tillerson, Mattis and McMaster say," said Mr. Corker, referring to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and the national security adviser, Lt. Gen. H. R. McMaster, is that "you can only tear the agreement up one time."

Right now, he added, "it's not like a nuclear weapon is getting ready to be developed."

Absent any urgency, he argued for a more nuanced approach. "Radically enforce it," he said of the deal, demanding access to "various facilities in Iran."

"If they don't let us in," Mr. Corker said, "boom."

He added: "You want the breakup of this deal to be about Iran. You don't want it to be about the U.S., because we want our

allies with us.” Mr. Tillerson, he said, ultimately wanted to renegotiate a deal that would stop Iran from enriching uranium forever — a concession it is hard to imagine Iran ever making.

Some version of Mr. Corker’s “radical enforcement” is essentially the strategy that national security officials have described in recent days. They deny they are trying to provoke the Iranians. Instead, they say they are testing the utility of the accord so they can report back to Mr. Trump about whether Iran’s interpretation of the provisions of the agreement, and its separate commitments to the International Atomic Energy Agency, would pave the way for international inspectors to go anywhere in the country.

That probably sets the stage for some kind of standoff.

Iran has long said that its most sensitive military locations are off limits. That issue came to a head in 2015 when international inspectors demanded access to Parchin, a military base near Tehran where there was evidence of past nuclear work. A compromise was worked out in which Iran took environmental samples itself, under surveillance by agency inspectors. The inspectors found little, but the precedent of how the inspection was carried out was cited by critics of the deal as evidence that the Iranians could hide work on uranium enrichment or other technology in off-limits military facilities.

It is unclear whether American intelligence agencies possess evidence of potential violations that go beyond suspicions. Several senior intelligence officials have warned there are risks involved in directing the international agency to specific locations, only to discover nothing nefarious. Such an outcome would have echoes, they caution, of the failed effort to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003.

One of Mr. Trump’s complaints about the 2015 deal is that it covers only nuclear activity, not support for terrorism, or missile testing, or Iran’s activities in Syria and Iraq. The State Department complained that an [Iranian launch of a missile](#) into space on Thursday violated the spirit of the nuclear accord.

The missile test was the first by Iran since Mr. Trump took office. But such tests of what are essentially carrier rockets are not prohibited.

The missile that was launched is known as a Simorgh, or Phoenix, which experts said was a copy of North Korea’s Unha space launch vehicle. Iran’s national news channel said the rocket was capable of placing satellites weighing up to 250 kilograms, or about 550 pounds, into a low earth orbit of 500 kilometers, or about 300 miles.

Nader Karimi Joni, a journalist close to the government of Iran’s president, Hassan Rouhani, said Thursday’s launch was a reaction to the House of Representatives’ vote on Tuesday approving a new round of sanctions against Iran. The Senate approved the bill Thursday night.

“Iran is boosting its missile capabilities in order to increase the accuracy, preciseness and range,” Mr. Joni said. “Iran will not stop the missile projects.”

In a sign of continuing struggles over Iran policy, the White House confirmed that Derek Harvey, the head of Middle East affairs on the National Security Council, was removed from his post on Thursday. No explanation was given, but Mr. Harvey was known to be especially hawkish about Iran’s role in the region, and he was appointed by the previous national security adviser, Michael T. Flynn. Mr. Harvey was widely reported to have been at odds with General McMaster, the current national security adviser, on Middle East policy.

## Iran could restart nuclear programme within hours - Rouhani



AFP

Hassan Rouhani said that under Donald Trump the US was not a "reliable negotiator"

**Iran's president has warned that it could restart its nuclear programme "within hours" if the United States imposes any more new sanctions.**

Hassan Rouhani also said the programme would be more advanced than in 2015, when Iran curbed its nuclear activities as part of a **deal** with world powers.

Iran says unilateral US sanctions targeting its ballistic missile programme breach the agreement.

But the US says Iran's missile tests have violated a **UN resolution**.

The resolution endorsed the nuclear deal and called upon Iran not to "undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology".

Iran says the missiles it has tested are not designed to carry nuclear warheads and insists its nuclear programme is entirely peaceful.

**Iran votes to boost its missile defence**

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**Iran nuclear deal: Key details**

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to pull out of the nuclear agreement, and after a missile test at the end of January his administration declared that the US would no longer turn "a blind eye to Iran's hostile and belligerent actions".

While acknowledging that the test was "not a direct violation" of the nuclear agreement, it imposed sanctions on 25 individuals and entities connected to its missile programme and the powerful Revolutionary Guards force.

Further sanctions targeting six Iranian companies were announced in late July following Iran's launch of a rocket capable of putting a satellite into orbit.



#### Media caption

The Phoenix rocket lifts off

And earlier this month, Mr Trump signed into law a **bill** passed by Congress that requires the president to impose sanctions on individuals facilitating Iran's ballistic missile programme, "foreign persons that are officials, agents, or affiliates" of the Revolutionary Guards, and on those responsible for human rights abuses.

On Sunday, Iran's MPs responded to the move by voting overwhelmingly in favour of legislation to increase the budget for the country's ballistic missile programme and the Revolutionary Guards' external operations arm, the Quds Force.

In a speech to parliament on Tuesday, Iran's president stressed that Iran wanted to abide by its commitments under the nuclear deal, which he called a "model of victory for peace and diplomacy". But he warned that this was not the "only option".

"Those who try to return to the language of threats and sanctions are prisoners of their past delusions," Mr Rouhani said.

"If they want to go back to that experience, definitely in a short time - not weeks or months, but in the scale of hours and days - we will return to our previous situation very much stronger."

He said the world had seen clearly that under President Trump the US was "not a good partner or a reliable negotiator", noting that he had said he would withdraw from the Paris climate accord and reverse parts of an agreement with Cuba.