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Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

MOMENTUM BUILDING FOR THE U.S. TO RETURN TO THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL

Sixteen years ago this week, the United States launched a massive military campaign that would become one of the greatest strategic foreign policy blunders in its history. The U.S. invasion of Iraq and ensuing war and years-long brutal sectarian conflict killed, maimed or displaced millions, cost trillions of dollars (and counting), and to this very day, continues, in one form or another, to wreak havoc on the region and beyond.

Donald Trump and his war cabinet led by National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo appear more than willing to take us down that road once again, [this time with Iran](#).

Indeed, the Trump team is using the exact [same playbook](#) the Bush administration used to sell the Iraq war, even including [hyping dubious ties between Iran and Al Qaeda](#). The cornerstone of this campaign, of course, was withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, an agreement that had previously eliminated a pretext that proved very convenient when making the case for war with Iraq.

But despite the Trump administration's best efforts to kill the deal outright, Iran and our international partners, especially our European allies, remain committed to it, for now.

And the progressive movement [now has what it lacked in 2002-2003](#) when pushing against the impending war in Iraq: power and influence. We can and will use that power to counter Trump's march to war with Iran, and **it has started with a push for the United States to return to compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.**

PRO-DIPLOMACY GROUPS URGE ACTION

Last month, more than 50 pro-diplomacy groups [signed a statement](#) urging members of Congress to speak out in support of the Iran deal and back the return of the United States into compliance with the agreement. The groups also urged lawmakers to oppose sanctions that would obstruct that process and any push toward war.

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That effort [has also extended](#) to the 2020 presidential candidates, with at least four of the top tier candidates -- Julian Castro, Kamala Harris, Bernie Sanders, and Elizabeth Warren -- having already committed to returning to the Iran deal.

We can be sure that Iran deal opponents will do everything they can to prevent this from happening. And there's already a push on Capitol Hill to [bar](#) any future president from re-entering the JCPOA. When making our case, we must remember that returning to the JCPOA will:

- **show that the United States will once again uphold its international commitments** and engage diplomatically with allies and adversaries alike.
- **give the U.S. a credible platform** to work to diplomatically resolve other issues of concern with Iran and with the aid and support of our allies and partners.
- **send a signal to Iran** that the United States will soon return to upholding its end of the bargain and perhaps deter Iran from any move that might violate the deal in the meantime.

We must also remember that re-entering the deal is not a concession to Iran. We would merely be reasserting our original promise to adhere to the deal. Speaking out in support of re-entry now will also help normalize the policy and the process, prepare Congress and the public, and create the political space that will be required to achieve this outcome.

JCPOA RE-ENTRY MOMENTUM BUILDING

Indeed, that political space has already begun to open up. Last month, the Democratic National Committee [passed a resolution](#) calling for the U.S. to re-enter the deal. Grassroots activists are springing to action as well.

Just this week, MoveOn released a poll which found that a whopping 74 percent of its members agreed that progressive presidential candidates should skip this weekend's AIPAC conference. As such, the group is [calling on the candidates to do just that](#), in part, because of AIPAC's opposition to the JCPOA, as MoveOn Campaign Director Iram Ali noted in a [statement](#):

"This survey is less of a formal vote and more of a gut check on what MoveOn members think. **It's no secret that that AIPAC has worked to hinder diplomatic efforts like the Iran deal**, is undermining Palestinian self-determination, and inviting figures actively involved in human rights violations to its stage. We asked our members what they think so that we can make more informed decisions—and over 74% agreed that progressive

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presidential candidates should skip the AIPAC conference. This should also give a clear insight to 2020 candidates on where their base stands instead of prioritizing lobbying groups and policy people who rarely step outside of D.C.”

So far, [seven](#) Democratic presidential hopefuls have vowed to skip the conference, including Sen. Kamala Harris, which is significant considering that her [record](#) on these issues has been described as “[more AIPAC than J Street](#).”

BURIED LEDES

It’s been a week since the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. Merely condemning these attacks [is not enough](#). **Pundits and politicians must stop their anti-Muslim rhetoric.**

We can [start](#) combating anti-Muslim hate by **decolonizing our textbooks**.

Here’s a [deep dive](#) into **the Pentagon’s bottomless money pit and why it failed a financial audit**. So why then, are Democrats [so willing to allow Trump](#) to throw more money at the Pentagon?

Meanwhile, acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan is [under investigation](#) by the DOD inspector general **for improperly advocating on behalf of his former employer, Boeing**. #DrainTheSwamp

The Trump administration [will ban](#) officials from the International Criminal Court from entering the United States to investigate possible war crimes by the U.S. military in Afghanistan, a move the ACLU [said](#) “**reeks of the very totalitarian practices that are characteristic of the worst human rights abusers.**”

Sometimes policy conferences need to explore [not just the policy](#) **but also the health and sustainability of the field itself**.

A federal judge this week [said](#) that the Trump administration was “**incorrect in claiming that there was no longer an impediment to the military’s implementation**” of Trump’s transgender ban.

J Street [explains](#) why it matters that the Trump administration is **no longer referring to the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights as “occupied territory.”**

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A HuffPost investigation [found](#) that at least **seven current members of the U.S. armed forces are connected to a white nationalist group.**

The Trump administration “[has been](#) **dramatically escalating its military operations in Somalia**, with little public scrutiny or debate about the operation’s goals or consequences,” like [civilian casualties](#).

The Saudi government’s murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi [was part of a broader, years-long, secret campaign to silence its critics.](#)

“I think most Americans, they’re aware of how much a waste of life, and money, and time the war in Afghanistan has been. **But I think they don’t know fully how much of a waste it was,**” former U.S. Marine combat videographer Miles Lagoze said in a NowThis video [this week](#). His must-see film “[Combat Obscura](#)” about daily life in the combat zones of Afghanistan told by Marines themselves is out in theaters.

And finally, Rep. Devin Nunes made headlines this week because he’s suing a parody Twitter account that purports to be one of his cows. This doesn’t really have much to do with foreign policy, we just thought it was funny that [Devin Nunes’ Cow](#) **had around 1,000 followers before the news of the lawsuit, and now has more than 600,000.** Nunes himself has about 400,000 followers.