

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: 8/14/2020

SL: Trump's Hybrid War on Iran Continues

The Takeaway:

- Today, the UN is likely to reject Trump's proposal to extend an arms embargo on Iran. But the danger doesn't end there: this vote may have been an intentional step in the Trump administration's plans to invoke the snapback of UN sanctions on Iran.
- Snapback would be devastating for a people already suffering under deadly sanctions, COVID-19, and a hybrid war of U.S. aggression that Trump continues to escalate.
- To create peace and security for the people in the U.S., Iran, and everywhere, we must block Trump's path to war and ensure the next administration halts any escalation, ends deadly sanctions, and recommits to diplomacy with Iran.

Trump's Anti-Iran Campaign is In Full Force

It was only eight months ago that the Trump administration unlawfully assassinated Major General Qasem Soleimani and brought the United States and Iran to the edge of all-out war. Thanks to a massive grassroots mobilization, we largely pulled back from that brink. But the unilateral *hybrid war* — an all-out assault of escalatory rhetoric, devastating sanctions, cyber-attacks, and more — has continued in full force. Now, Trump is once again marching us toward the edge.

“Maximum Pressure” Means Maximum Danger

From day one of his administration, Donald Trump's policies toward Iran have been defined by single-minded hostility and utter indifference to human suffering.

- In 2018, Trump unilaterally withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or Iran nuclear deal, despite it being a landmark achievement in improving relations between the participating countries and all evidence pointing toward its efficacy.
- Withdrawal came with the reimposition of deadly U.S. sanctions that had been suspended under the JCPOA, bolstering a devastating sanctions regime that has suffocated the people of Iran for decades.
- In January, Trump engaged in a series of escalatory tit-for-tat military actions culminating in the Soleimani assassination, launching the countries on a path to war that was only narrowly avoided.

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- Despite widespread demands to ease sanctions as the COVID-19 crisis devastates Iran, Trump has refused to make any meaningful change.

To be clear: anti-Iran aggression has been a bipartisan agenda in Washington since well before Trump. But the current administration has taken the campaign to characteristic extremes. Throughout, Trump has claimed to be acting on the side of the people of Iran against their repressive government. In reality, his imperial agenda has only strengthened Iran's hardliners and undermined actual grassroots movements at the behest of warmongers like the so-called [Foundation for Defense of Democracies](#).

Dangerous Escalations

In recent months, the situation has turned even more dangerous. Iran has been beset by a series of deadly explosions at weapons complexes and a nuclear facility — an apparent [Israeli attack](#) likely conducted with the Trump administration's tacit consent. The country continues to suffer the combined effects of sanctions and COVID-19, [reaching](#) its highest daily death toll in July, as many countries began to recover. Last week, Trump reportedly tapped war criminal and imperialist icon Elliott Abrams as State Department special envoy to Iran, and then laughably claimed that if reelected he would have a new nuclear deal within four weeks. And this week, the United States [seized](#) Iranian ships carrying fuel to Venezuela, raising tensions to new heights.

The UN Rejects an Arms Embargo

On top of this all, today the UN Security Council is set to reject a proposal from the Trump administration to extend an arms embargo on Iran. It's the right choice by the Council, but it may be just the pretext Trump is looking for to further torpedo diplomacy.

This is a bit complicated, so let's break it down:

- After the United States unilaterally withdrew from the JCPOA, the other signers have continued to abide by most of the agreement in the hopes that it could be salvaged.
- Under the JCPOA, the UN arms embargo on Iran is set to expire in October of this year. The Trump administration proposed to extend the embargo, knowing well that the other JCPOA participants, hoping to save the deal, would reject it.
- When the proposal is defeated, Trump and his fellow war-hawks likely plan to use the rejection to [justify](#) triggering "[snapback](#)" sanctions. Under the JCPOA, UN sanctions on Iran have been lifted, but any member country can choose to snap the sanctions back if Iran is no longer abiding by the deal. The Trump administration may plan to use the failed vote as a pretext to invoke snapback, falsely claiming "you left us no choice."
- How could the United States invoke snapback if it has already withdrawn from the agreement? By all accounts, it shouldn't be able to. But the Trump administration will try to force it through anyway. The fate of the case would depend on the decision of the Security Council chair, who may not be immune to U.S. pressure.

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So where does this all leave us? If the ploy succeeds, Iran would be subjected to even more devastating sanctions, the JCPOA would be dealt a major blow, and any potential for a future administration to rejoin the deal or recommit to diplomacy with Iran would be frustrated.

Fear of Escalation

With the 2020 election around the corner and the Biden-Harris campaign rising in the polls, it's increasingly likely that Trump is deliberately fishing for conflict to boost his domestic support — or at least sabotage a Biden administration's ability to heal relations. As we call on leaders in Congress and people across the country to block Trump's path to war, we must also ensure that our a next administration is committed to taking a different route: the next administration must end deadly blanket sanctions, reject tit-for-tat escalations, recommit to the JCPOA, normalize diplomatic relations, and altogether reject the dangerous notion that the Iranian government's faults can somehow be addressed by brute, violent force. Only through diplomacy can we create peace, for the people of Iran, the United States, and the whole world.

Grassroots Power

This week, Win Without War hosted, and Advocacy Director Erica Fein moderated, a panel discussion on January's mobilization against war with Iran. Here, are a few highlights from four leaders in the fight for a more peaceful world:

- **Rahna Epting**, [MoveOn](#) — “When I saw thousands of people standing together, I felt righteous and grounded — that is the power of protest.”
- **Azadeh Shahshahani**, [Project South](#) — “The work needs to be led *a/ways* by directly impacted people. The only meaningful long-lasting change has been led by the people.”
- **Nahid Soltanzadeh**, [MPower Change](#) — “We need to follow the lead of BIPOC [Black, Indigenous and people of color] organizations and leaders... it is so important to center those voices, *not* just in moments of emergency but always.”
- **Representative Ro Khanna** — “Grassroots... mobilizations *can* make a difference. With Yemen *and* Iran, grassroots activists changed the conversations and the result.”

BURIED LEDES

Israel and the United Arab Emirates [announced](#) that they will normalize diplomatic relations and forge a broad new relationship... [it's not much to celebrate](#).

The Israeli military [carried out](#) overnight attacks on the open-air prison that is the Gaza Strip. No PR stunt with the UAE should distract from that.

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Mass strikes and demonstrations [continue](#) across Bolivia, demanding free and fair elections following last year's coup and repeated delays of promised elections. With the leftist party [polling](#) ahead, the "pro-democracy" industry in D.C. has been strangely silent 🙄

Surprise: **Proxy wars have [done little](#) to accomplish the U.S.'s strategic goals in the Middle East...** to say nothing of what they've done to the people who live there.

FIRST! **Russia has supposedly [approved](#) a COVID-19 vaccine**, after less than two months of human testing. It's unclear what that will actually mean, if anything, but it seems like a good time to say: when a COVID-19 vaccine is confirmed, it should be free for everyone, everywhere.

The Democratic Party's [pledge](#) to stand up to "Chinese aggression" is a dangerous provocation at a time when cooperation on climate change is essential. The *last* thing we need is a new Cold War.

One of Congress's strongest proponents of peace, Ilhan Omar, just [won](#) her primary in a landslide. We say again: progressive foreign policy [pays](#) in the voting booth. Will other Dems get on board?

Democrats [saw](#) a surge in voter registrations in June in the wake of protests against police violence, **particularly among young People of Color.**

And finally, miss being with your coworkers? Less productive working in silence? **Try the surprisingly popular [Office Noise Generator](#).** Sounds of your coworker who laughs at his own jokes while he writes your weekly newsletter not included.