

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2019

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on Iran Sanctions and an Exchange With Reporters

June 24, 2019

The President. Okay, thank you very much. In a few moments, I'll be signing an Executive order imposing hard-hitting sanctions on the Supreme Leader of Iran and the office of the Supreme Leader of Iran and many others.

Today's action follows a series of aggressive behaviors by the Iranian regime in recent weeks, including shooting down of U.S. drones. They shot down the drone. It's—I guess everyone saw that one. And many other things. They've done many other things aside from the individual drone. You saw the tankers, and we know of other things that were done also, which were not good and not appropriate.

The Supreme Leader of Iran is one who ultimately is responsible for the hostile conduct of the regime. He's respected within his country. His office oversees the regime's most brutal instruments, including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Sanctions imposed through the Executive order that I'm about to sign will deny the Supreme Leader and the Supreme Leader's office, and those closely affiliated with him and the office, access to key financial resources and support. The assets of Ayatollah Khamenei and his office will not be spared from the sanctions.

These measures represent a strong and proportionate response to Iran's increasingly provocative actions. We will continue to increase pressure on Tehran until the regime abandons its dangerous activities and its aspirations, including the pursuit of nuclear weapons, increased enrichment of uranium, development of ballistic missiles, engagement in and support for terrorism, fueling of foreign conflicts, and belligerent acts directed against the United States and its allies.

The agreement that was signed was a disaster. It was not doing what it was supposed to do. Many bad things were taking place. And most importantly, it was so short term that, within a very short number of years, they would be able to make nuclear weapons. And that's unacceptable. Never can Iran have a nuclear weapon.

Also included in this is, we want the stoppage immediately of their sponsoring of terrorism. They sponsor terrorism at a level that nobody has ever seen before, and that's been over the last number of years. And they've taken all of that money that was given to them by the past administration, and much of it was given out to terrorist organizations.

In fact, I remember when John Kerry was asked a question about whether or not this money will be spent for terror. He actually said "yes"—or at least he was referring to some of it. But he said, "Yes, it will be used for terror," with—if you can believe that. We're giving them money. We're saying, "Yes, it can be used for terror." That was not a good answer, but that was the least of it, frankly.

So America is a peace-loving nation. We do not seek conflict with Iran or any other country. I look forward to the day when sanctions can be finally lifted and Iran can become a peaceful, prosperous, and productive nation. That can go very quickly; it can be tomorrow. It can also be in years from now.

So I look forward to discussing whatever I have to discuss with anybody that wants to speak. In the meantime, who knows what's going to happen. I can only tell you we cannot ever let Iran have a nuclear weapon. And it won't happen.

And secondly, and very importantly, we don't want money going out to sponsor terror. And they are the number-one sponsor of terror anywhere in the world.

So I'll sign this order right now. And I want to thank our military. I want to thank all of the people that have been working with me over the last number of months on this. I think a lot of restraint has been shown by us. A lot of restraint. And that doesn't mean we're going to show it in the future.

But I felt that we want to give this a chance—give it a good chance—because I think Iran, potentially, has a phenomenal future.

Just—and I say that about North Korea too. I've said it about North Korea. I think North Korea has a phenomenal future. And I think Iran also has a phenomenal future. And we'd would like to—I think a lot of people would like to see them get to work on that great future.

So I'll sign this now. And I appreciate you all being here. Thank you.

[*The President signed the Executive order and related documents.*]

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

Diplomatic Efforts With Iran/Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

Q. Mr. President, is your goal to negotiate a new deal with Iran?

The President. We would love to be able to negotiate a deal if they want to. If they don't want to, that's fine too. But we would love to be able to. And frankly, they might as well do it soon.

But obviously, the people of Iran are great people. You know, I know many of them. I lived in New York. I haven't been there very much the last 2½ years, but I know many Iranians living in New York, and they're fantastic people. I have many friends that are Iranian, and it's just very sad what's happening to that country.

The deal should've never been done. It wasn't ratified by Congress. It wasn't properly done, as you know. As a treaty, it wasn't properly done. It was incorrectly done. But we'll get it properly done.

So we'll see what happens. I hope it's going to be for the good. But the people in Iran are great people, and all of the people I know—so many, in New York—these are great people.

Okay. Anything else?

Imposing New U.S. Sanctions on Iran

Q. Sir, just to be clear, is this the U.S. response to the Iranians shooting down the drone?

The President. This, you can probably, Steve [Steve A. Holland, Reuters], add that into it, but basically, this is something that was going to happen anyway.

Q. Okay.

Iran's Nuclear Program

Q. If they reach the uranium limits on the 27th, will you take additional action?

The President. I won't say what I'll do, but I don't think they should do it.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamanei of Iran

Q. What is your message for the Supreme Leader? And do you want a meeting with him one on one?

The President. Just—my only message is this: He has the potential to have a great country, and quickly. Very quickly. And I think they should do that rather than going along this very destructive path. Destructive for everybody. Destructive for everybody.

We can't let them have a nuclear weapon. He said he doesn't want nuclear weapons. It's a great thing to say. But a lot of things have been said over the years, and it turns out to be not so. But he said very openly and plainly for everyone to hear that he does not want to have nuclear weapons. So if that's the case, we can do something very quickly. Okay?

Thank you very much, everybody.

Chairman of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un of North Korea

Q. What was your letter to Kim Jong Un?

The President. He sent me birthday wishes. But it was just a very friendly letter both ways. We have a really good relationship.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State John F. Kerry. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Iran sanctions, signing the Executive order; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters :: White House.

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