

GENEVA (Dispatches) -- The United States' reliance on sanctions is "out of control," Iranian Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday.

The U.S. Treasury on Tuesday sanctioned two Iranian banks and a handful of firms allegedly linked to the Basij force. "U.S. addiction to sanctions is out of control," Zarif wrote in a post on Twitter.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- The Washington Post, whose columnist Jamal Khashoggi was reported to have been killed in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, has accused the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump of performing a "diplomatic cleanup operation" for Riyadh.

In an editorial headlined "Why is the Trump administration cleaning up Saudi Arabia's mess?" the paper backed calls by U.S. officials for an independent international commission into the disappearance of the journalist earlier this month, which has tarnished the image of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman.

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Viewpoint

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U.S. Imposes New Sanctions on Iranian Businesses

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- New U.S. sanctions unveiled Tuesday against Iranian businesses are part of a psychological war, Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said on Wednesday.

"This action shows the spitefulness of the government of America toward the Iranian people and is a clear insult to legal and international mechanisms," Qasemi said.

The U.S. Treasury Department on Tuesday slapped sanctions on a network of more than 20 businesses, including Bank Mellat and Mehr Eqtasad Bank and other companies linked to investment, commodities and engineering.

The sanctions also target Iran Tractor Manufacturing Company, the Middle East's largest tractor manufacturer, and Esfahan's Mobarakeh Steel Company, the largest steelmaker in the Middle East and North Africa region.

"America's new sanctions are a clear insult to international and legal mechanisms and a result of the American government's blind vindictiveness against the Iranian nation," Qasemi said.

The Treasury's announcement came two weeks before the Trump administration imposes a second round of sanctions, targeting Iran's oil sector and banking, on November 4.

The first round of the sanctions, targeting Iran's access to the U.S. dollar, metals trading, coal, industrial software, and auto sector, took effect in August.

The U.S. pulled out of a landmark 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers in May.

Qasemi denounced U.S. sanctions as "cruel and unfair". He called Washington's "lack of adherence to international legal mechanisms" a threat not only "to the Iranian people's interests but also the world's stability and security".

Iran's Bank Parsian, among the companies sanctioned on Tuesday, said in a statement that the measures would change little. "This bank's international activities using dollars and America had ceased for years," it said.

Iran's biggest steel company similarly dismissing the measures as "nothing new".

In a statement to investors, Mobarakeh Steel Company said: "International sanctions are nothing new and Mobarakeh has faced them throughout the years just like other sectors of the Iranian economy.

"This will not disrupt the company's production, financial activities and exports," it added.

Mobarakeh was accused of supporting the Mehr Eqtasad Iranian Investment Company, which is linked to Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), according to the U.S. Treasury.

A steel industry expert in Tehran told AFP that the sanctions would not stop Mobarakeh's exports.

"The company will now have problems doing anything, be it attracting financing from abroad or having any overseas accounts," the news agency quoted Mojtaba Fereydouni as saying.

"But sanctions cannot just stop Iran's exports. You just ship it to a third country, unload the shipments there and leave it for a few days. Then you reship them from there with no mention of Iran and a new certificate of origin.

"All this will incur a cost of \$20-\$30 on each tonne, but it's not impossible," he added.

Iran's steel industry was targeted under the first wave of U.S. sanctions reimposed in August. But Mobarakeh said it had indigenized its production line.

Fereydouni added that it had set up a factory to produce the key raw material of electrode graphite, which is normally imported, primarily from India.

Iran is the 10th biggest crude steel producer, according to the World Steel Association.

The government said it exported \$2.53 billion of steel products between March and September, up 53 percent on the previous year -- an increase which is thought to be driven by a rush by buyers to make purchases before sanctions hit.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov also repudiated new U.S. sanctions on Iran, saying Washington appears to be taking every opportunity to exert pressure on countries it dislikes.

"Regardless of what reasons, under what pretexts and against which countries the United States imposes its unilateral sanctions, we firmly oppose it," Ryabkov told Russian state news agency Sputnik.

"The unacceptability of unilateral extraterritorial sanctions as a foreign policy tool has been and remains the core of our position. We see that Washington respects no limits in the pursuit of exerting pressure on countries it dislikes, including Iran," he added.

Years of Western sanctions have hurt the Russian economy. U.S. Congress is considering expanding sanctions on Russia's big state banks, with an American business group warning on Tuesday that it could cause major turmoil for global energy supplies.

State banks dominate the Russian financial sector and work closely with energy giants in the world's largest oil and gas exporter.

Alexis Rodzianko, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia, told Bloomberg that hitting the banks would be "a scorched-earth approach to diplomacy".

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Khamenei: Our Scientific Advancement Will End Threats



Ayatollah Khamenei waves to a group of Iranian academics during a meeting in Tehran, Oct. 17, 2018.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Wednesday urged officials to benefit from the ideas and recommendations of academics in order to improve the country's affairs.

"The intellectual elite should be benefitted from in planning the matters of the country. Some outstanding talents enjoy both a great capability of thinking and management skills, which must be made use of," he said.

The Leader met a group of academics, including CEOs of knowledge-based enterprises, top ranking participants of Olympiads, cross-

country contests and scientific festivals, as well as outstanding academic researchers from different universities and exceptionally talented students and students ranking top in the 2018 cross-country university entrance exams.

Ayatollah Khamenei mentioned that Iran should safeguard its existence via scientific development. "If we do not advance in science, our enemies' threats will last permanently."

The Leader said human science today faces limits and Iranian academic elites should participate in pushing those limits.

"We have lagged behind the

global scientific movement for 200 years. This is because of the Iranian talent and academic elite have been neglected."

"Why should our country lag behind the rest of the world at a time when science has advanced at a great pace around the world?" Ayatollah Khamenei asked.

The Leader said Iran is currently contributing more than its share to the global production of science at a rate of about 1.9 percent. "This is great, but we are not satisfied and it should increase."

Ayatollah Khamenei also said Iran only had 150,000 university students before the Islamic Revolu-

tion in 1979, but there are currently more than 4 million university students in the country.

The Leader said the state must collaborate with the academics and intellectuals for further development of the nation.

"There should be a mutual exchange between the elite and the administration. The government must provide services for the elite, not letting them be left without use."

The Leader said, "Today, it has been proved that nothing is more influential in the country's development than the human force. Human resources are a great capital and the enemies seek to take this wealth away from the country.

"The enemy wants science exclusively for itself so no other nation can gain power-producing and wealth-producing knowledge. Hence, they murder scientists of other countries.

"This does not only happen to us. During U.S. occupation of Iraq, tens of Iraqi scientists were identified and killed, so that Iraq could not progress after Saddam."

Ayatollah Khamenei said that "if we advance scientifically, the threats of our enemies will not last forever, and will perish".

The Leader cited "physical elimination of the academic elite" as a method used by the hegemonic system to destroy the great assets of the world nations.

"In addition to physical elimination, cultural deviation of the elite and preoccupying them with peripheral

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Claims to Zero Iran's Oil Sales 'Political Bluff'

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Statements by the United States that it would reduce Iran's oil exports to zero are a "political bluff", the head of state-run National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) told Tasnim news agency on Wednesday.

U.S. officials have said they aim to cut Iran's oil exports to zero, with new sanctions scheduled to kick in on Nov. 4.

NIOC head Ali Kardor said U.S. President Donald Trump had been trying to reduce Iran's oil exports for months.

"The president of America has done whatever he can and he knows very well that getting Iran's oil exports to zero was a political bluff," Kardor said.

The U.S. administration has been pushing its allies to cut Iranian oil imports and encouraging Saudi Arabia, other OPEC states and Russia to pump more oil to meet any shortfall.

Kardor said Iran did not have

any difficulties receiving payments for oil exports and said the Islamic Republic could accept payments in euros instead of dollars if necessary.

"There is no problem on this issue," Kardor said, Iran's ISNA news agency reported. "With European support there will not be a problem."

European powers claim to have been trying to salvage a nuclear accord with Iran after the United States withdrew in May.

The European Union said last month it was considering setting up a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to facilitate trade with Iran and said it could be in place before November.

European diplomats have said the SPV would create a barter system, similar to one used by the Soviet Union during the Cold War, to exchange Iranian oil for European goods without money changing hands.

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Middle East Eye Reveals: Bin Salman's Bodyguards Among Khashoggi's Killers

ANKARA (Dispatches) -- Seven of the 15 men suspected of being involved in an operation to kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi belong to Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman's personal security and protection detail, Middle East Eye revealed on Wednesday.

The suspects went and ate dinner at the Saudi consul-general's residence after murdering and dismembering Khashoggi inside the consulate, a source in the Istanbul Prosecutor General's office also told MEE as Turkish police finally gained access to the building on Wednesday.

Most of them are high-ranking officers who accompanied the crown prince on diplomatic visits to the UK and France earlier this year.

MEE said it has obtained a document from the Saudi Interior Ministry detailing their ranks, dates of birth, passport and telephone num-

bers and when they accompanied bin Salman on trips abroad. All of them are members of the crown prince's Special Security Force.

MEE said it is not publishing the document in order to protect the safety of its sources.

Confirmation that these seven members were high-ranking members of the crown prince's close protection team and travelled with him on high profile visits regularly will complicate efforts currently under way to distance bin Salman from the murder investigation in Istanbul.

At least three of them accompanied bin Salman on his visit to the UK in March. They are First Lieutenant Dhaar Ghalib Dhaar al-Harbi, Sergeant Major Walid Abdullah al-Shihri, and Abdul Aziz Muhammad Musa al-Hawsawi.

At least two of them accompanied

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