

BERLIN (Reuters) -- Iran intends to preserve the nuclear deal with major powers if all parties fulfill their obligations under it, its ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) told a German newspaper.

"What we're doing only has one aim: We want to preserve the nuclear treaty," Iran's envoy to the Vienna-based authority Kazem Gharibabadi told weekly newspaper Die Zeit. He said: "Everything can be reversed within a single hour - if all of our partners in the treaty would just fulfill their obligations in the same way."

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump gave a warm White House welcome Tuesday to the leader of Qatar amid a bitter rift between the tiny, energy-rich nation and its fellow American allies in the Persian Gulf and rising tensions with Iran.

Trump clasped hands with the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and called him a friend while recognizing the country's extensive military partnership with the U.S. and billions of dollars in purchases from


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## Macron's Envoy Told in Tehran: Iran Not to Retreat Without 'Full Rights'

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- Iran has told Europe it will not reverse its decision to increase uranium enrichment beyond the limits set by the 2015 nuclear accord until it achieves its "full rights" to an economic relationship with the EU under the deal.

Ali Shamkhani, a senior security official, made his remarks on Wednesday as he met a senior French diplomat sent to Tehran by the French president, Emmanuel Macron.

Shamkhani said the Iranian strategy is unchangeable, and stated European countries have shown a lack of will to keep their side of the bargain.

The two-day visit by the French envoy to Tehran, Emmanuel Bonne, was seen as probably the last attempt to broker a deal before Europe decided to put Iran's actions into the formal dispute mechanism of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Guardian wrote.

"If the dispute mechanism is unable to resolve the differences, it is likely the EU will restore sanctions against Iran that were taken off when the deal was first signed," the British newspaper added.

Iran's foreign minister said the "trigger mechanism" cannot be enforced to reciprocate Iran's moves with regard to the Iran nuclear deal.

"The trigger mechanism cannot become operational," said Muhammad Javad Zarif after a cabinet meeting. "The JCPOA has a mechanism which is supposed to stop violations of the deal," said the top diplomat.

"Now, the JCPOA has been breached, and Iran has enforced that mechanism," Zarif underlined.

He further said Iran will not agree to attending talks with other parties under pressure. "They should stop pressure and economic war against Iranian people, and then there will be a chance to talks about the JCPOA."

Zarif also touched upon a meeting of the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) about Iran's nuclear activities slated for later Wednesday.

In a tweet, Zarif said it was ironic Wednesday's meeting had been called by the United States, given it had withdrawn from the nuclear deal and "punishes all who observe it."

Diplomats in Vienna expected no concrete action as parties to the deal consider their next move.

Tehran has been demanding that the EU do more to compen-

sate Iran for Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the deal last year, a withdrawal followed by a U.S. attempt to impose maximum economic pressure on Tehran, including a worldwide ban on the purchase of Iranian oil exports.

Semkhani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), told Bonne that Tehran regards Iran's action as within the terms of the JCPOA because the country is entitled to downgrade its commitments if the other side fails to meet their own.

Iran has been frustrated by the slow European progress in setting up a long-planned financial mechanism designed to circumvent the impact of U.S. secondary sanctions on firms that seek to trade with Iran.

Shamkhani insisted Tehran would resist U.S. pressure, saying: "Iran has in practice proved that in economic, political and defense dimensions it has the ability and capacity to manage and deal with various tensions and challenges. You cannot speak the language of force."

He said Europe should not have allowed the U.S. to take it hostage, and instead showed its independence from the U.S.

Bonne said: "I have not come to Iran as a mediator and do not carry any message from the U.S. to Tehran. Given Iran's undeniable role and influence in the region, Paris is interested in continuing dialogue and cooperation with Iran to manage current crises in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon."

Iran until recently consistently lived up to its commitments under the deal, but is now in breach of two aspects, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is tasked with inspections.

Bonne arrived in Tehran after Iran announced on Monday it had surpassed 4.5 percent uranium enrichment -- above the 3.67 percent limit under the agreement.

The IAEA said on Monday that Iran has exceeded the purification cap, having earlier this month confirmed it had surpassed 300 kilograms of enriched uranium reserves, another limit that was imposed by the deal.

But in an apparent effort to boost France's diplomatic efforts, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian described these breaches as "slight excesses."

Bonnes' mission was "to try and open the discussion space to avoid an uncontrolled escalation, or even an accident," according to Le Drian.

## President Rouhani's Warning to UK: 'You Will Realize Consequences'



Oil supertanker Grace 1 is seen near Gibraltar, Spain July 4, 2019.

TEHRAN (Dispatches) -- President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday Britain would face "consequences" over the seizure of an Iranian oil tanker.

Iran has demanded the immediate release of the Grace 1, which British Royal Marines boarded off Gibraltar last week and seized, claiming that it was breaking sanctions by taking oil to Syria.

"You (Britain) are the initiator of insecurity and you will realize the consequences later," Rouhani said after a cabinet meeting.

"Now you are so hopeless that, when one of your tankers wants to move in the region, you have to

bring your frigates (to escort it) because you are scared. Then why do you commit such acts (seizure)? You should instead allow navigation to be safe," Rouhani said.

Tehran has called the move an act of "piracy" and denied that the destination was Syria. Iranian officials argued that EU sanctions could apply only to the bloc's members, not Iran.

Iran Foreign Minister Muhammad Javad Zarif stated that the shipment should not be of concern to the British.

"Iran is neither a member of the EU nor subject to any European oil embargo. Last I checked, EU was against extraterritoriality," Zarif

tweeted, calling the seizure "piracy, pure and simple."

"It sets a dangerous precedent and must end now," his tweet read.

In strongly worded comments on Wednesday, Rouhani said what Britain did was "very cheap, wrong and a mistake". It will be "to your loss", he added, saying the British operation came after an order from hawks in the Trump administration and U.S. regional allies.

Calling the tanker's seizure an act of maritime piracy, Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier-General Amir Hatami said it "will not be tolerated by us and will not go without a response."

The secretary of Iran's Expediency

Council, a key advisory and arbitration body, warned that if Britain failed to release the tanker Iran would be forced to take tit-for-tat action.

"If Britain does not release the Iranian oil tanker, the relevant authorities will be duty-bound to take reciprocal action and seize a British oil tanker," said council secretary Mohsen Rezaei.

Media in Tehran have urged the government to retaliate by stopping British oil tankers from operating in the strategic waters of the Strait of Hormuz, rather than summoning the British ambassador to Tehran.

The comments by the Iranian president came after the top U.S. military commander said the Pentagon was talking to a number of countries about putting together a naval task force to "ensure freedom of navigation" in waters close to Iran and Yemen.

Rouhani also said Iran's decision to increase uranium enrichment would produce fuel for power plants and serve other peaceful aims, and that it was within the framework of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

He was speaking a day after European powers accused Iran of "pursuing activities inconsistent with its commitments" under the nuclear deal and called for an urgent meeting of the parties to the agreement.

"You (Europeans) do not need to worry about Iran, your concern must be over the United States, which has violated this whole commitment and undermined international obligations," Rouhani said.

Britain, Germany, France, Russia, China and Iran are the remaining parties to the deal, which the United States abandoned last year.

## Lebanon Blasts U.S. Sanctions on Hezbollah

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Lebanon's parliament speaker said Wednesday that the United States' move to place two of Hezbollah's parliamentarians on its sanctions blacklist was an assault on his country.

"It is an assault on the parliament and as a result an assault on all of Lebanon," said Nabih Berri, the head of the Amal party, according to the Reuters news agency.

The U.S. Treasury on Tuesday added Lebanese lawmakers Amin Sherri and Muhammad Hasan Raad to a terror-related blacklist. Also placed on the blacklist was Wafiq Safa, a top official of the resistance movement.

Hezbollah fighters have backed government forces in neighboring Syria in the war that broke out there in 2011 and last fought a war with the occupying regime of Israel in 2006.

On Tuesday, lawmaker Ali Fayyad said the move "is a hu-

miliation for the Lebanese people" and called on parliament and the government to issue a formal condemnation.

Lebanese Finance Minister Ali Hasan Khalil meanwhile tweeted that the U.S. sanctions "concern all of the Lebanese even if they are directed at Hezbollah" and are "unjustified."

After the U.S. Treasury's announcement, Hezbollah television Al-Manar said the movement's Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was due to appear Friday on TV.

Nasrallah is due to address a series of Lebanese and regional issues and is expected to also discuss the latest sanctions.

Hezbollah was established in 1982 during Lebanon's civil war, and is now a major political player in the country. It won 13 seats out of 128 in the May 6, 2018 general election, and holds three cabinet posts.

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## Ambassador to UN Takht-Ravanchi: Iranians Won't Sit on Their Hands If Attacked

UNITED NATIONS (Dispatches) -- Iran's ambassador to the United Nations says the country would not hesitate to respond to any military threat from the United States.

Majid Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC in an interview aired on Wednesday that the Iranians would not "sit on their hands" if attacked.

His remarks came after an Iranian military commander said U.S. military bases and aircraft carriers are within the range of Iran's missiles, and would be destroyed if the U.S. made any "mistake."

Takht-Ravanchi also insisted that the Europeans do more to compensate Tehran for economic losses inflicted by U.S. sanctions - otherwise Iranians will continue to exceed limits on their nuclear fuel production.

However, the ambassador said that Iran would stay in the nuclear

accord for now.

He also said there would be consequences if the UK didn't release an Iranian oil tanker it seized recently off the coast of Gibraltar.

Tensions have risen sharply since the U.S. pulled out of the deal which restricted Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

Tehran took no immediate action after the U.S. reimposed punishing sanctions last year, but has now begun to nudge the levels of its enriched uranium beyond the deal's limits, in small and calculated steps.

Takht-Ravanchi said that Iran was not violating the accord, which he was involved in negotiating. He cited what he said were provisions that allowed a rollback on some commitments if other parties were in breach.

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