

Tensions Rising in the Middle East: Trump Threatens Iran and the Palestinians

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After Iran conducted a long-range ballistic missile test, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu wasted no time accusing Iran of “flagrant violation” of the UN Security Council resolution 2231. BBC news reported that “Benjamin Netanyahu said he would raise renewing sanctions when he meets US President Donald Trump in February.” BBC news did say that “It is not yet clear what type of missile was launched, or if it explicitly violated the UN resolution.” Netanyahu did not have to wait until February to discuss sanctions on Iran as the Trump administration’s NSA advisor ret. Lt Michael Flynn announced in a press conference that “Iran was on notice”, which constitutes a direct threat to Iran. The Trump administration wasted no time by immediately responding to Iran’s missile test by imposing new sanctions. ABC news reported what the latest sanctions entail:

The economic restrictions will target 13 individuals and 12 entities in what senior administration officials described today as a direct response to Iran’s missile test and its “provocative” behavior. Specifically, actions against these companies and individuals were made, officials said, based on “their support to Iran’s ballistic missile program or for their support to the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (Quds Force).” Trump administration officials, who briefed reporters over the phone Friday, made specific mention of the IRGC’s support for Houthi rebels in Yemen, who recently attacked a Saudi frigate.

The new sanctions were also careful not to violate the 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran, which Trump has called “terrible”

Trump tweeted “Iran is playing with fire - they don’t appreciate how “kind” President Obama was to them. Not me!” making it known that there would be consequences to Iran’s actions under his administration. Trump’s 2016 Speech at the *American-Israel Public Affairs Committee* (AIPAC) made it clear on where he stood on Iran:

Iran is a problem in Iraq, a problem in Syria, a problem in Lebanon, a problem in Yemen and will be a very, very major problem for Saudi Arabia. Literally every day, Iran provides more and better weapons to support their puppet states. Hezbollah, Lebanon received — and I’ll tell you what, it has received sophisticated anti-ship weapons, anti-aircraft weapons and GPS systems and rockets like very few people anywhere in the world and certainly very few countries have. Now they’re in Syria trying to establish another front against Israel from the Syrian side of the Golan Heights

Trump even believes that Iran is a “major problem” for Saudi Arabia, one of the worst

dictatorships in the world with a deplorable human rights record who happens to be a well-known state sponsor of terrorism. Trump's policy in the war against terror without Saudi Arabia on the list contradicts his entire strategy. According to Trump's military chief, General "Mad Dog" Mattis, Iran *"is the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world."* Flynn went on to say that Obama's response to Iran's actions was weak:

"The Obama Administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions—including weapons transfers, support for terrorism, and other violations of international norms. The Trump Administration condemns such actions by Iran that undermine security, prosperity, and stability throughout and beyond the Middle East and place American lives at risk

Netanyahu said that he *"listened with appreciation to the remarks of General [Michael] Flynn on the need to counter Iran's aggression"* during a speech at the West Bank settlement of Ariel in memory of its founder and late mayor Ron Nachman according to *The Times of Israel*. Netanyahu is set to meet Trump in mid-February regarding a number of issues including Iran, Israeli settlements and possibly moving the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. One day after Trump's inauguration speech, Netanyahu spoke on social media in regards to Iran's threat to Israel as *The Jerusalem Post* reported:

I plan to speak soon with President Trump about how to counter the threat of the Iranian regime, which calls for Israel's destruction," Netanyahu said in the two-and-a-half minute video addressed directly to the Iranian people.

This ruthless regime continues to deny you your freedom," Netanyahu said in the English video, accompanied by Farsi subtitles. "It prevents thousands of candidates from competing in elections, it steals money from your poor to fund a mass murderer like [Syrian President Bashar] Assad. By calling daily for Israel's destruction, the regime hopes to instill hostility between us. This is wrong. We are your friend, not your enemy."

As for Trump's tweet claiming that Iran was *"playing with fire"* Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif responded with his own twitter message by saying that *"Iran unmoved by threats as we derive security from our people. We'll never initiate war, but we can only rely on our own means of defense."* Zarif also said *"will never use our weapons against anyone, except in self-defense. Let us see if any of those who complain can make the same statement."* Iran says that the missile tests were not in violation of the nuclear deal reached on July 2015. At a joint news conference with French politician Jean-Marc Ayrault, Zarif told reporters that *"The missile issue is not part of the nuclear deal. As all signatories to the nuclear deal have announced, the missile issue is not a part of nuclear deal."* Zarif pointed out the fact that according to the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, it does not prohibit Iran from testing missiles or a "medium-range ballistic missile" which was used for the recent test. Zarif also said that the missiles were *"not designed for the capability of carrying a nuclear warhead... Our ballistic missile was designed to carry a normal warhead in the field of legitimate defense."* Flynn also blamed an attempted missile attack on U.S. Navy destroyer parked off the coast of Yemen in mid-October of last year supposedly by the Houthi Rebels on Iran.

From Obama to Trump: Iran in the Crosshairs

In mid-September 2016, Reuters reported that Obama approved the largest military aid package in U.S. history to Israel as it headlined with '*U.S., Israel sign \$38 Billion Military Aid Package.*' The report said "*The deal, whose details were reported by Reuters earlier, will allow Washington's chief Middle East ally to upgrade most of its fighter aircraft, improve its ground forces' mobility and strengthen its missile defense systems, a senior U.S. official said*"

Netanyahu will push Trump to become more aggressive with Iran as Trump himself promised during his campaign. Will Trump lead the U.S. into a war with Iran? Will Trump's proposal to reduce sanctions, boost economic trade and fight ISIS with Russia remain in place? Putin will proceed with caution when he meets with Trump in the near future. *RT News* reported in 2012 what Russia's deputy prime minister and former envoy to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin had said if Iran were attacked:

Iran is our close neighbor, just south of the Caucasus. Should anything happen to Iran, should Iran get drawn into any political or military hardships, this will be a direct threat to our national security

China would also not tolerate an attack against Iran as Rear Admiral Zhang Zhaozhong warned in 2011 that "*China will not hesitate to protect Iran even with a Third World War.*" When the Taiwanese President called Trump after he was elected, it sparked a diplomatic dispute between Beijing and Washington which did not help matters. The Trump administration also has spoken about China's so-called "*take over*" of the South China Sea, a strategic trade route that accounts for more than \$4.5 trillion in trade per year. Trump's Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson claimed that China's '*Island-building*' in the South China Sea were "*akin to Russia's taking of Crimea*" (another lie) during his confirmation hearings. China has warned Washington to "*speak and act cautiously.*" The South China Sea is an important transportation and trade route for China and historically speaking, the South China Sea has been China's for over 2,000 years as the China news source '*Xinhuanet.com*' stated:

However, the truth is China's activities in the South China Sea date back to over 2,000 years ago, *The People's Daily* article said. China has been the first to discover, name and develop the group of islands in the South China Sea, which have been known as the Nanhai Islands in China. For centuries, the Chinese government had been the administrator of the islands by putting them under the administration of local governments, conducting military patrols and providing rescue services.

The Nansha and Xisha Islands, occupied by Japan during World War II, were returned to China as part of the territories stolen from China. This has been clearly set out in international documents such as the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation. China sent government and military officials to recover the islands and deployed troops there

Tensions in the South China Sea will continue under the Trump administration. It is most likely that Russia and China will back Iran against any form of aggression by Washington or Tel Aviv.

From Obama's \$38 Billion Aid to Israel to Trump's Saber-Rattling in the Middle East

The \$38 Billion aid package for Israel's security was signed off just in time for the Trump administration. The aid package allows Israel to prepare for a full-scale war against Iran and other adversaries in the region as Trump continues to ignite tensions in the Middle East on Israel's behalf and of course for its natural resources. How can we forget what Trump said during his campaign on September 7, 2016 *"We go in, we spend \$3tn, we lose thousands and thousands of lives, and then ... what happens is we get nothing. You know, it used to be to the victor belong the spoils."* He went on to say that *"One of the benefits we would have had if we took the oil is Isis would not have been able to take oil and use that oil to fuel themselves."* That is true. But here is where Trump complicates matters as in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* in 2011 with reporter Kelly Evans when he said *"You heard me, I would take the oil,"* he said. *"I would not leave Iraq and let Iran take the oil"*. And he insisted to *ABC News* that this did not amount to national theft. *"You're not stealing anything,"* Trump said. *"We're reimbursing ourselves ... at a minimum, and I say more. We're taking back \$1.5tn to reimburse ourselves."* Trump also suggested that if the U.S. gets involved in Libya it was only to *"take the oil."* Trump is in-line with big oil corporations. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, a former Exxon Mobil executive will also make matters worse for oil-producing countries in the Middle East and to an extent Venezuela.

To Israel's benefit, Trump has filled his administration with people who are pro-Israel (and in some cases are Zionists themselves) supporters. In regards to the Palestinians, Trump recently stated that his administration will take *"severe punitive measures"* if the Palestine Authority goes to the *International Criminal Court* (ICC) to petition the court to halt Israel's settlement expansion. The Trump administration would cut the financial aid to the Palestinians, close down the offices of the PLO and reinstate them to terrorist group status along with Al Qaeda, an appeasement to the Israelis. Trump recently warned the Israeli government that building new settlements *"may not be helpful"* to Israel-Palestinian peace efforts although he made it clear that his administration *"has not taken an official position on settlement activity"* according to *The Chicago Tribune*. Trump's senior advisor and son-in-law, Jared Kushner whose family has donated *"tens of thousands of dollars"* to Bet El, an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank is a direct conflict of interest in the peace process. *Reuter's* article clarifies Kushner's role in the settlement activity *'For hardline West Bank settlers, Jared Kushner's their man'* which states:

For many in the Israeli settlement of Bet El, deep in the occupied West Bank, Donald Trump's choice of Jared Kushner as his senior adviser on the Middle East is a sign of politics shifting in their favor.

They regard Kushner, whose family's charitable foundation has donated tens of thousands of dollars to their settlement, as part of a diplomatic rebalancing after what they view as eight years of anti-Israel bias under the U.S. administration of Barack Obama

Trump cannot and will not be able to broker an honest peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians with his threats and pro-Israel cabinet members within his administration. Trump's policies towards Iran and the Palestinians shows that he will follow the same agenda of previous administrations of creating chaos and war in the Middle East as Israel continues to expand its territories by building illegal settlements on Palestinian territory. So far, it looks like a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians will be unlikely. Trump's suggestion that the U.S. embassy be moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would also anger not only the Palestinians but the majority of the Muslim world. Any deal by the Trump

administration will favor the Israelis, not the Palestinians.

Will the U.S. Declare War on Iran in March?

Iran's plan to ditch the U.S. dollar this coming March is not only due to Trump's Muslim ban, but the difficulty in dealing with continued sanctions and threats by Washington. Will Iran's proposal to stop using the U.S. dollar push the Trump administration to declare war on the Islamic Republic? Congressional approval from both Republicans and Democrats (both parties are in the pockets of Israel) will give Trump the green light. *The Financial Tribune* based in Tehran (www.financialtribune.com), an economic daily news source confirmed that the Central Bank of Iran will stop using the US Dollar:

Iran will stop using the US dollar as its currency of choice in its financial and foreign exchange reports from the new fiscal year that begins in March, announced the governor of the Central Bank of Iran late Saturday.

Iran's difficulties [in dealing] with the dollar were in place from the time of the primary sanctions and this trend is continuing, but we face no limitations regarding other currencies," Valiollah Seif also said in a televised interview as reported by CBI's official news website

Iran is an obstacle to the U.S. and Israeli supremacy in the Middle East since Iraq and Syria have been systematically destroyed by war and Western-sponsored sanctions. Iran is the prize for Israel, if they destroy Iran; Israel will be the dominant nation with a military financed by the U.S. government with an undeclared nuclear weapons arsenal at their disposal. Israel would be considered a Zionist Empire or what Netanyahu would call the "Jewish State" supported by the Anglo-American establishment. Trump's actions thus far prove that he will be Israel's president, Netanyahu knows it, Iran knows it, and the Palestinians, Russia and China know it.

Russia, China and the rest of the world must stop the U.S. and Israel's war rhetoric against Iran and establish a peaceful solution to this developing crisis. The outcome of this foreseeable war will lead the world into a perilous path of uncertainty unless Trump makes a deal where all parties including Iran, Israel, the Palestinians and the Saudis can come to an agreement and peace can become a reality. Will Trump surprise us and make a peace deal happen? With Trump's hard-line approach to Iran and the Palestinians before and after he was elected, peace will remain unlikely.

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