

# Trump Administration Announces ‘Third Party’ Sanctions on Iran

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

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*The Trump administration [declared Saturday](#) [1] that all UN sanctions against Iran had been restored, and that its triggering of the “snapback” mechanism in the UN Security Council resolution that enshrined the 2015 Iran nuclear deal had taken effect at 8 p.m. Eastern Time.*

That is thirty days after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo notified the council that Iran was in “significant non-performance” with its obligations under the accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

The White House plans to issue an executive order on Monday spelling out how the US will enforce the restored sanctions, and the State and Treasury departments are expected to outline how foreign individuals and businesses will be penalized for violations.

“The United States expects all U.N, member states to fully comply with their obligations to implement these measures,” Mike Pompeo said. “If UN member states fail to fulfill their obligations to implement these sanctions, the United States is prepared to use our domestic authorities to impose consequences for those failures and ensure that Iran does not reap the benefits of UN-prohibited activity.”

It’s worth pointing out that the Iran sanctions that were lifted in 2015 after the signing of JCPOA were “third party” sanctions, implying that any state or business organization doing business with Iran wouldn’t be able to engage in commercial activities with the US government and commercial enterprises based in the US.

This is exactly what the executive order on Monday would likely stipulate, and it needs to be seen whether the administration allows any exceptions or relief to states and business entities violating the order.

Although the European Union is resisting the Trump administration’s pressure to enforce the snapback mechanism, the global financial system is led by the United States. Europe and the UN will find no choice but to toe Washington’s line, if the Trump administration issues the executive order penalizing states and commercial organizations doing business with Iran.

Donald Trump has repeatedly said during the last four years that the Iran nuclear deal signed by the Obama administration in 2015 was an “unfair deal” that gave concessions to

Iran without giving anything in return to the US.

Unfortunately, there is a grain of truth in Trump's statements because the Obama administration signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran in July 2015 under pressure, as Washington had bungled in its Middle East policy and it wanted Iran's cooperation in Syria and Iraq to get a face-saving.

In order to understand how the Obama administration bungled in Syria and Iraq, we should bear the background of Washington's Middle East policy during the recent years in mind. The nine-year conflict in Syria that gave birth to myriads of militant groups, including the Islamic State, and after the conflict spilled across the border into neighboring Iraq in early 2014 was directly responsible for the spate of Islamic State-inspired terror attacks in Europe from 2015 to 2017.

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in August 2011 to June 2014, when the Islamic State overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq, an informal pact existed between the Western powers, their regional allies and jihadists of the Middle East against the Iranian resistance axis. In accordance with the pact, militants were trained and armed in the training camps located in the border regions of Turkey and Jordan to battle the Syrian government.

This arrangement of an informal pact between the Western powers and the jihadists of the Middle East against the Iran-allied forces worked well up to August 2014, when the Obama Administration made a volte-face on its previous regime change policy in Syria and began conducting air strikes against one group of militants battling the Syrian government, the Islamic State, after the latter overstepped its mandate in Syria and overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq from where the US had withdrawn its troops only a couple of years ago in December 2011.

After this reversal of policy in Syria by the Western powers and the subsequent Russian military intervention on the side of the Syrian government in September 2015, the momentum of jihadists' expansion in Syria and Iraq stalled, and they felt that their Western patrons had committed a treachery against the jihadists' cause, hence they were infuriated and rose up in arms to exact revenge for this betrayal.

If we look at the chain of events, the timing of the spate of terror attacks against the West was critical: the Islamic State overran Mosul in June 2014, the Obama Administration began conducting air strikes against the Islamic State's targets in Iraq and Syria in August 2014, and after a lull of almost a decade since the Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and 2005, respectively, the first such incident of terrorism occurred on the Western soil at the offices of Charlie Hebdo in January 2015, and then the Islamic State carried out the audacious November 2015 Paris attacks, the March 2016 Brussels bombings, the June 2016 truck-ramming incident in Nice, and three horrific terror attacks took place in the United Kingdom within a span of less than three months in 2017, and after that the Islamic State carried out the Barcelona attack in August 2017, and then another truck-ramming atrocity occurred in Lower Manhattan in October 2017 that was also claimed by the Islamic State.

More to the point, the dilemma that the jihadists and their regional backers faced in Syria was quite unique: in the wake of the Ghouta chemical weapons attacks in Damascus in August 2013, the stage was all set for yet another no-fly zone and "humanitarian intervention" a la Gaddafi's Libya; the war hounds were waiting for a finishing blow and

then-Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu and former Saudi intelligence chief Bandar bin Sultan were shuttling between the Western capitals to lobby for the military intervention. Francois Hollande, then the president of France, had already announced his intentions and David Cameron, then the prime minister of the UK, was also onboard.

Here it should be remembered that even during the Libyan intervention, the Obama administration's policy was a bit ambivalent and France under the leadership of Nicolas Sarkozy, then the president of France, had taken the lead role. In Syria's case, however, the British parliament forced David Cameron to seek a vote for military intervention in the House of Commons before committing the British troops and air force to Syria.

Taking cue from the British parliament, the US Congress also compelled Obama to seek approval before another ill-conceived military intervention, and since both the administrations lacked the requisite majority in their respective parliaments and the public opinion was also fiercely against another Middle Eastern war, therefore Obama and Cameron dropped their plans of enforcing a no-fly zone over Syria.

In the end, France was left alone as the only Western power still in favor of intervention; at that point, however, the seasoned Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov staged a diplomatic coup by announcing that the Syrian government was willing to ship its chemical weapons stockpiles out of Syria and subsequently the issue was amicably resolved.

Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf Arab states, the main beneficiaries of the proxy war against the Baathist government in Syria, however, had lost a golden opportunity to deal a fatal blow to their regional rivals.

To add insult to the injury, the Islamic State, one of the numerous militant outfits fighting in Syria, overstepped its mandate in Syria and overran Mosul and Anbar in Iraq in 2014, from where the US troops had withdrawn only a couple of years ago in December 2011.

Additionally, when the graphic images and videos of Islamic State's executions surfaced on the internet, the Obama administration was left with no other choice but to adopt some countermeasures to show that it was still sincere in pursuing Washington's dubious "war on terror" policy; at the same time, however, it assured its Turkish, Jordanian and Gulf Arab allies that despite fighting a war against the maverick jihadist outfit, the Islamic State, the Western policy of training and arming the so-called "moderate" Syrian militants will continue apace and that Bashar al-Assad's days were numbered, one way or the other.

Moreover, declaring the war against the Islamic State in August 2014 served another purpose too: in order to commit the US Air Force to Syria and Iraq, the Obama administration needed the approval of the US Congress which was not available, but by declaring a war against the Islamic State, which was a designated terrorist organization, the Obama administration availed itself of the war on terror provisions in the US laws and thus circumvented the US Congress.

But then Russia threw a spanner in the works of NATO and its Gulf Arab allies in September 2015 by its surreptitious military buildup in Latakia that was executed with an element of surprise unheard of since General Rommel, the Desert Fox.

When Russia deployed its forces and military hardware to Syria in September 2015, the militant proxies of Washington and its regional clients were on the verge of drawing a

wedge between Damascus and the Alawite heartland of coastal Latakia, which could have led to the imminent downfall of the Bashar al-Assad government.

With the help of the Russian air power, the Syrian government has since reclaimed most of Syria's territory from the insurgents, excluding Idlib in the northwest occupied by the Turkish-backed militants and Deir al-Zor and the Kurdish-held areas in the east, thus inflicting a humiliating defeat on Washington and its regional clients.

Keeping this background of the quagmire created by the Obama administration in Syria and Iraq in mind, it becomes amply clear that the Obama administration desperately needed Iran's cooperation in Syria and Iraq to salvage its botched policy of training and arming jihadists to topple the government Bashar al-Assad in Syria that backfired and gave birth to the Islamic State that carried out some of the most audacious terror attacks in Europe from 2015 to 2017.

Thus, Washington signed JCPOA in July 2015 that gave some concessions to Iran, and in return, then hardliner Prime Minister of Iraq Nouri al-Maliki was forced out of power in September 2014 with Iran's tacit approval and moderate former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi was appointed in his stead who gave permission to the US Air Force and ground troops to assist the Iraqi Armed Forces and allied militias to beat back the Islamic State from Mosul and Anbar.

The Iran nuclear deal, however, was neither an international treaty under the American laws nor even an executive agreement. It was simply categorized as a "political commitment." Due to the influence of Zionist lobbies in Washington, the opposition to the JCPOA in the American political discourse was so vehement that forget about having it passed through the US Congress, the task the Obama administration faced was to muster enough votes of dissident Democrats to defeat a resolution of disapproval so that it couldn't override a presidential veto.

The Trump administration, however, is not hampered by the legacy of Obama administration and since the objective of defeating the Islamic State had already been achieved in 2017, therefore Washington felt safe to unilaterally annul the Iran nuclear deal in May 2018 at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's behest, and the crippling "third party" sanctions have once again been put in place on Iran.

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Note

[1] US says all UN sanctions on Iran restored:

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-says-all-un-sanctions-on-iran-restored-but-world-yawns/2020/09/19/afb460a2-fad4-11ea-85f7-5941188a98cd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-says-all-un-sanctions-on-iran-restored-but-world-yawns/2020/09/19/afb460a2-fad4-11ea-85f7-5941188a98cd_story.html)



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**Michel Chossudovsky**

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