

US preparing New Sanctions over Iran's Missile Program

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US President Barack Obama's administration is reportedly preparing fresh sanctions on international companies and individuals over Iran's missile program.

They would be the first financial sanctions on Iran since Tehran agreed to a landmark nuclear agreement in July and present a serious challenge to the accord's implementation.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the sanctions would target a number of Iranian nationals and international companies over suspected involvement in Iran's missile program.

"We've been looking for some time at options for additional actions related to Iran's ballistic missile program based on our continued concerns about its activities," an Obama administration official was quoted as saying.

"We are considering various aspects related to additional designations, as well as evolving diplomatic work that is consistent with our national security interests," the official said, on condition of anonymity.

US officials claim the new sanctions are in line with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the nuclear agreement, and the Treasury Department can impose new sanctions on Iran over its missile development.

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on all matters of the state, has made it clear that Iran would consider any new sanctions a breach of the JCPOA.

In an October letter to President Hassan Rouhani, outlining his conditional approval of the JCPOA, the Leader said that in case of a violation, "the government would be obliged to take necessary measures and halt JCPOA activities."

"Imposing any sanctions at any level and under any pretext by any side of the negotiations will be considered a breach of the JCPOA," Ayatollah Khamenei said in his letter.

Iran has also defended its right to carry out missile tests for defensive purposes, saying none of his country's missiles are capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

"It's our legitimate defense. These are not missiles that are designed to be capable of

carrying nuclear warheads and, therefore, it is within our right to self-defense," said Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in an interview published by *The New Yorker* earlier this month.

According to the Journal, the sanctions would prohibit US or foreign nationals from conducting business with targeted companies.

US banks would also be required to freeze any assets the companies or individuals hold inside the American financial system.

Tehran is already disappointed by Obama's signing of a Congress bill this month aimed at limiting travels to Iran and trade with the country.

Iran says the law violates a July nuclear accord and amounts to new sanctions on the country.

The US Supreme Court is also mulling a case on appropriating \$2 billion of Iranian assets frozen in a bank in New York.

The Obama administration has urged the tribunal not to overturn the decisions of US circuit and appeals courts to use the funds.

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