

PROJECT SHOMER

TRUMP'S RECORD ON IRAN IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS AND OFFERS NO COMFORT FOR ISRAEL'S SAFETY

OPEN SOURCE RESEARCH MEMO
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Trump's tough talk masks his incoherent and inconsistent record with respect to Israel's most dangerous enemy, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI). Trump's administration included several senior officials who advocated a hardline approach to Iran, however each of those advisors resigned or were fired, while Trump repeatedly failed to follow through on his bombastic threats against Tehran.

Trump's abrupt withdrawal of the U.S. from the multilateral Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action aka JCPOA), followed by his repeated subsequent attempts to meet with IRI leaders to negotiate a new deal, demonstrated a lack of any viable strategy to contain Iran's Islamic Regime.

Key to Trump's appeal among supporters of Israel is the belief that he was and is "strong on Iran." However, the reality, as demonstrated by the research detailed below, is very different: Trump's actions with respect to Iran made Israel less safe, while driving the IRI into the embrace of Russia and China.

ONCE ELECTED, TRUMP STALLED ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE JCPOA

- After repeatedly vowing on the campaign trail in 2016 to immediately withdraw the U.S. from the JCPOA "Iran deal" upon election to the Presidency, which he employed as an cudgel against Obama, **Trump in fact stalled on actually withdrawing from the JCPOA for the first 15 months of his term**, reportedly only acting to finally withdraw in May 2018 after hawkish advisors led by John Bolton urged him to honor his campaign promise.
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/07/us/politics/trump-announce-withdraw-us-iran-deal.html>)

- **When Trump did finally withdraw from the JCPOA in May 2018, he did so without any substitute strategy** to constrain the IRI's nuclear weapons development, other than a "maximum pressure campaign" of various sanctions, which by the last year of Trump's term had proven to be ineffective in dissuading the IRI from rapid replenishment of its nuclear stockpile.
(<https://armscontrolcenter.org/a-worthless-withdrawal-two-years-since-president-trump-abandoned-the-jcpoa/>)
- **Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, without any strategy to replace it, has been characterized by many senior Israeli intelligence and military leaders**, including three former Director-Generals of the Mossad, the former head of IDF Military Intelligence, the former Defense Minister, and the former head of the Israel Atomic Energy Commission, among others, **as a reckless move that made Israel less safe than it was under the JCPOA.**
(<https://www.timesofisrael.com/there-was-no-strategic-debate-on-iran-under-netanyahu-ex-idf-intel-chief/>)
(<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-11-21/ty-article/watch-one-on-one-with-the-man-who-led-israels-covert-iran-war/0000017f-f0ea-df98-a5ff-f3ef79580000>)

FOLLOWING TRUMP'S WITHDRAWAL FROM THE JCPOA HE PIVOTED FROM INITIAL THREATS AND SANCTIONS TO REPEATED OVERTURES FOR HIS OWN "IRAN DEAL"

- Following his unilateral withdrawal from the JCPOA, **Trump dithered among options for alternative containment of Iran, which had after the withdrawal embarked on a ramp-up towards nuclear breakout. Trump's cabinet urged him to proactively neutralize IRI's nuclear facilities, but Trump declined to authorize any such military strikes.** Absent any diplomatic or military action other than sanctions, just one year after the JCPOA withdrawal the IRI was assessed to be within weeks of nuclear breakout.
(<https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Iran-News/UN-officials-US-is-planning-a-tactical-assault-in-Iran-592832>)
(<https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/19/politics/blinken-nuclear-weapon-breakout-time/index.html>)
- On May 27, 2019, one year after the JCPOA withdrawal, **Trump responded favorably to a request by Japan's Prime Minister the U.S. return to negotiations with the IRI, saying: "I'm not looking to hurt Iran at all. I'm looking to have Iran say 'No nuclear weapons.' ... and I think we'll make a deal. I think Iran – again, I think Iran has tremendous economic potential, and I look forward to letting them get back to the stage where they can show that.... It has a chance to be a great country, with the same leadership. We're not looking for regime change. I just want to make that clear. We're looking for no nuclear weapons."**
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Otb7HYa-7jo>)
- **Trump wanted to meet with Iran's foreign minister at the August 2019 G7 summit, at the request of Emmanuel Macron, to discuss circumventing sanctions with a direct line of credit**

to the IRI (which would have undermined the sanctions campaign and broken decades of U.S. precedent), and was only dissuaded from this plan when Bolton and Pompeo both threatened to resign, with the backing of Netanyahu.

(<https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/2020-06-21/ty-article/.premium/how-bolton-netanyahu-and-pompeo-sabotaged-trumps-dream-of-talks-with-iran/0000017f-f40c-d887-a7ff-fcecb3ec0000>)

- In September 2019, Trump tried but failed to arrange a personal meeting with the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in which Trump wanted to propose an easing of sanctions in return for a new “nuclear deal”; Trump, encouraged by Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, was in favor of a sanction-abatement deal with the Islamic Regime, in order to secure a diplomatic victory for which he could personally take credit, revealing Trump’s willingness to compromise Israel’s security for his own gain.
(<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-11/trump-rouhani-meeting-odds-improve-after-john-bolton-s-exit>)
(<https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-said-mulling-easing-iran-sanctions-to-secure-rouhani-meeting/>)
- Trump stated in a June 2024 video interview that he had wanted to include Iran as part of the Abraham Accords and that he had wanted to make a new U.S. deal with the Islamic Regime, subject only to prohibition on nuclear armament, i.e. without any requirement for regime change, security guarantees to Israel, nor even termination of the IRI’s patronage of terrorist proxies: “The deal was simple: Iran can’t have a nuclear missile. It cannot have that nuclear capability. Other than that we talk about everything. They [the Islamic Regime] would’ve been very happy.” Trump blasted Biden for not having made such a deal, but did not explain why he did not make this deal himself while President.
(<https://www.iranintl.com/en/202406213475>)
(<https://x.com/andrewghalili/status/1804192593208631350>)
- On September 26, 2024, Trump reaffirmed the same appeasement doctrine with respect to the Islamic Regime: “Iran would have made a deal with us. It would have been a great deal for them, the only thing is they cannot have nuclear weapons...they would have made a deal and they would have been happy and they would have had an unbelievable civilization but it didn’t work out because of a thing that was very sad to watch: that was the [2020 U.S. presidential] election... We have to made a deal, because the consequences are impossible – we have to make a deal... I was prepared to get it done within one week after the election.” The following day Netanyahu delivered a starkly contrasting message to the UN General Assembly: “appeasement must end now; the nations of the world should support the brave people of Iran who want to rid themselves of this evil regime.”
(<https://www.youtube.com/live/4QXUdPskzNs>)
(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV8U3l_ECC4)

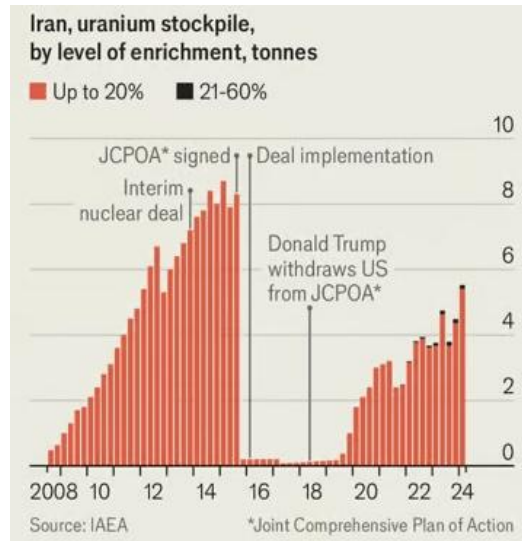
TRUMP SQUANDERED DETERRENCE OF IRAN BY REPEATEDLY MAKING BOMBASTIC THREATS AND THEN FAILING TO FOLLOW THROUGH

- In May 2019, three tankers were damaged by Iran-linked mines in the Persian Gulf and a pro-Iranian militia allegedly fired a rocket that landed near the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad; in response **Trump tweeted on May 19th, “If Iran wants to fight, that will be the official end of Iran” and threatened that continued incidents would cause Iran to “suffer greatly” – however following the June 2019 destruction of two tankers in the Persian Gulf by Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) mines, Trump failed to follow through on his threats, instead only introducing cosmetic sanctions and sending 1,500 of the US troops (fewer than requested by the DoD) to the region.**
(<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/29/trump-is-driving-iran-into-russias-arms-nuclear-deal-putin-rouhani-sanctions/>)
- In June 2019, **Trump abruptly called off (without consulting any senior officials) a sea-to-ground missile strike on IRGC military facilities that he had authorized in response to the downing by Iran of a U.S. drone, just 10 minutes before the attack was to occur; Trump inexplicably publicized his flip-flop via Twitter the next day writing that the aborted strike (which would have without Trump’s Tweet remained secret) had been “cocked and loaded” (sic). Trump instead opted for a modest cyberattack.**
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/21/us/politics/trump-iran-decision.html>)
- In an interview with Fox News about this aborted strike, **Trump explained: “I said: you know what, they shot down an unmanned drone – plane – whatever you want to call it, and here we are sitting with 150 dead people [i.e. potential casualties at the IRGC missile base that was to be targeted], that would have taken place probably within half an hour, and I didn’t like it, I didn’t think it was proportionate.”**
(<https://www.foxnews.com/video/6050962866001>)
- The much heralded assassination of General Soleimani took place via drone strike in Iraq, and was authorized by Trump allegedly based on intelligence of an imminent attack he was planning on U.S. troops stationed in Iraq – it had nothing whatsoever to do with protecting Israel and per Trump himself Netanyahu declined to cooperate with the U.S. on the assassination.
(<https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/07/politics/qasem-soleimani-reasons-justifications/index.html>)

IRAN’S NUCLEAR ENRICHMENT STOCKPILE INCREASED RAPIDLY DURING TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY AFTER HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE JCPOA

- Trump’s unilateral withdrawal of the U.S. did undermine but did not end the JCPOA, a deal which had nonetheless reduced Iran’s enriched uranium stockpile from over 8,000kg in 2015 to under 300kg in 2016. One year after the U.S. JCPOA withdrawal, Iran, which had according to

the IAEA previously maintained compliance with the stockpile limitations of the JCPOA, began to rapidly grow its uranium stockpile far beyond the JCPOA limits. **By the time of Biden’s election in November 2020, the IAEA reported that Iran’s uranium stockpile had exceeded the levels allowed and maintained under the JCPOA by 1,200%.**



(<https://www.economist.com/international/2024/05/20/irans-new-leaders-stand-at-a-nuclear-precipice>)

(<https://iranprimer.usip.org/index.php/blog/2024/may/30/timeline-irans-nuclear-challenges-and-iaea>)

- Moshe Ya’alon, **Israel’s Defense Minister under Netanyahu at the time that the JCPOA was negotiated and signed, in 2021 called Trump’s withdrawal from the JCPOA a “huge mistake” and said that Trump’s decision to unilaterally withdraw was worse than the JCPOA agreement itself, which Ya’alon had opposed at the time that it was signed.** (<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2021-11-21/ty-article/watch-one-on-one-with-the-man-who-led-israels-covert-iran-war/0000017f-f0ea-df98-a5ff-f3ef79580000>)

TRUMP WAS ACTUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE \$6 BILLION SOUTH KOREAN OIL DEBT TO IRAN THAT HE FALSELY CLAIMS BIDEN ALLOWED TO FUND 10/7

- In fact, it was Trump who in 2018 granted eight countries, including South Korea, a sanctions waiver, following his withdrawal from the JCPOA, that allowed for their continued procurement of oil from Iran. As a result, South Korean banks held \$6 billion owed to Iran for its oil purchases, the payment of which was frozen by subsequent 2019 sanctions. **Biden continued to maintain the sanctions preventing South Korea’s release of these funds**

to Iran, until in 2023 he negotiated for the release of five U.S. hostages held by Iran in exchange for the remittance from Korean banks of this \$6 billion to accounts managed by Qatar as a trustee, under specific restrictions to ensure the funds are used only for humanitarian purposes. However, **none of this \$6 billion had been accessed by Iran prior to 10/7.** (<https://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-oil-waiver-iran-hamas-israel-1833864>)

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Trump's return to the presidency would be a four-year game of "Russian roulette" for Israel and the world order.

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