

Iran keeps door open to talks with Trump administration



Majid Takht-Ravanchi
IRNA

International Desk

Iran has kept the door open to negotiations with the incoming administration of US President-elect Donald Trump, while warning the Republican head of

state that any attempt to reimpose "maximum pressure" on the Islamic Republic would fail to extract concessions. Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs, told the Financial Times

that coercion and intimidation would prove ineffective in the long-running stand-off between Iran and the West over Tehran's nuclear program.

"As for negotiations, we need to observe US policy and decide how to respond accordingly," Takht-Ravanchi said in his office at the foreign ministry in Tehran. "Right now, the key question is how the new administration will approach Iran, the nuclear issue, regional security and the Middle East. It's premature to speculate about specific outcomes."

Takht-Ravanchi said the nuclear deal reached with the West in 2015, from which Trump later withdrew the US, "could still serve as a foundation and be updated to reflect new realities," adding that, "If the other parties return to their obligations, we

have repeatedly said that we are willing to do the same." He added, "We do favor negotiations, as we proved [with that deal]... But who sabotaged the negotiations previously? It was the Trump administration who was unwilling to negotiate."

'Maximum resistance'

At the same time, the veteran diplomat and former nuclear negotiator warned that if Trump again takes a tough approach, "maximum pressure will be met with maximum resistance."

"We will continue to work around sanctions, diversify our trade partners and strengthen regional relations to maintain calm," he added.

During his first term, Trump triggered a nuclear stand-off with Iran after he abandoned

the 2015 accord, known as the JCPOA, that Tehran had signed with world powers, and imposed waves of sanctions on the Islamic Republic in what he called a "maximum pressure" campaign. People familiar with Trump's thinking have told the Financial Times that his administration would try to "bankrupt" Iran to force the Islamic Republic into talks.

"We hope he doesn't repeat the same mistake because the outcome will be no different," Takht-Ravanchi said.

"The Trump administration claimed that it would bring Iran to the negotiating table [during his first term], but failed to do so. It is up to them to practice the same approach for another four years and fail again. But that is an irrational thing to do," Takht-Ravan-

chi said.

Reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian was elected in July on promises of resolving the nuclear crisis to secure sanctions relief.

Pezeshkian's Deputy for Legal Affairs Majid Ansari said on Monday that Iran is ready for "lawful and fair relations" with any country, including the US, based on international law and the recognition of the will of the Iranian nation, according to ISNA.

Citing Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and President Pezeshkian, Ansari said, "We are not at war with any country." Iran and the United States have had no formal diplomatic relations since April 1980 after Iranian students stormed the US Embassy in Tehran, taking 52 Americans hostage and holding them for 444 days.

Lebanon reviews US cease-fire proposal

International Desk

Senior officials in Lebanon are reviewing a US-backed cease-fire proposal to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah.

A top government official in Beirut said on Friday that US Ambassador Lisa Johnson had presented a 13-point proposal to halt the Israel-Hezbollah conflict. It includes a 60-day truce, during which Lebanon will deploy troops to the border. The official added that Israel has yet to respond to the plan.

The proposal is largely based on UN Security Council resolution 1701, which ended the last war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006, officials said. It calls for Hezbollah to withdraw from southern Lebanon and says only the Lebanese military and UN peacekeepers should operate in the region, which borders Israel.

Amos Hochstein, a senior US aide to President Joe Biden, is on standby, prepared to travel to Beirut based on Lebanon's official response in the coming days.

Lebanese officials are expected to respond to the proposal soon. Lebanon's parliamentary Speaker Nabih Berri, who Hezbollah said was authorized to negotiate on its behalf, said Friday that discussions were "progressing."

A lawmaker from the same parliamentary bloc as the speaker, Qassen Hashem, told local radio Saturday that the response to the draft cease-fire proposal would be ready by Monday or Tuesday at the latest, while accusing Israel of trying "to discuss the draft under fire to impose its conditions."

Israel's military has stepped up strikes on Lebanon in recent days. On Sunday, an Israeli attack on a central Beirut district killed Hezbollah's spokesman Mohammed Afif, the latest senior figure



AP

slain by Israel. Hezbollah said Monday that four members of its media office also died in the strike.

Israel launched a major offensive in Lebanon in mid-September following months of tit-for-tat border attacks which started when Hezbollah attacked Israel in solidarity with Hamas and Palestinians in Gaza.

Lebanese authorities say more than 3,480 people have been killed since October last year, with most casualties recorded since September.

Russia warns US long-range missile approval escalates Ukraine war

The Kremlin warned Monday that President Joe Biden's decision to let Ukraine strike targets inside Russia with US-supplied longer-range missiles adds "fuel to the fire" of the war and would escalate international tensions even higher.

Biden's shift in policy added an uncertain, new factor to the conflict on the eve of the 1,000-day milestone since Russia began its full-scale invasion in 2022, AP reported.

Washington is easing limits on what Ukraine can strike with its American-made Army Tactical Missile System, or ATACMs, US officials told The Associated Press on Sunday, after months of ruling out such a move over fears of escalating the conflict and bringing about a direct confrontation between Russia and NATO.

"It is obvious that the outgoing administration in Washington intends to take steps and they have been talking about this, to continue adding fuel to the fire and provoking further escalation of tensions around this conflict," spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

The scope of the new firing guidelines isn't clear. But the change came after the US, South Korea and NATO said recently that North Korean troops are in Russia and apparently are being deployed to help Moscow drive Ukrainian troops out of Russia's Kursk border region. Russia also is slowly pushing Ukraine's outnumbered army backward in the eastern Donetsk region.

Peskov referred journalists to a statement made by President Vladimir Putin in September in which he said allowing

Ukraine to target Russia would significantly raise the stakes.

It would change "the very nature of the conflict dramatically," Putin said at the time. "This will mean that NATO countries — the United States and European countries — are at war with Russia."

Peskov said that Western countries supplying longer-range weapons also provide targeting services to Kiev. "This fundamentally changes the modality of their involvement in the conflict," he said. Putin warned in June that Moscow could provide longer-range weapons to others to strike Western targets if NATO allowed Ukraine to use its allies' arms to attack Russian territory. He also reaffirmed Moscow's readiness to use nuclear weapons if it sees a threat to its sovereignty.

New EU sanctions will not go unanswered: Tehran

EU, UK impose fresh bans on Iran's shipping, aviation sectors

International Desk

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei warned that new sanctions imposed by the European countries and the UK on the Islamic Republic will not go unanswered.

Baghaei made the remarks in a weekly press conference on Monday hours before the European Union announced new sanctions against Iran over what it claimed to be Tehran's support for Russia's war on Ukraine.

He said Iran will reciprocate any "inappropriate action" against its interests. The European Commission said on Monday it has added the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines (IRISL) and its director Mohammad Reza Khiabani — among others — to its sanctions list.

It also prohibited the export, transfer, supply or sale from the EU to Iran of components used to make missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).

The commission also said it banned any transaction with ports "owned, operated or controlled" by sanctioned individuals and entities or otherwise used to supply Russia with drone- and missile-related technology and components.

"This measure includes the access to facilities of the ports and docks, such as Amirabad and Anzali, and the provision of any services to vessels," the EU said in a statement as the bloc's foreign ministers met in Brussels.

Amirabad and Anzali are two Iranian ports on the Caspian Sea.

Also on Monday, Britain announced fresh sanctions against Iran, freezing the



Esmail Baghaei
IRNA

assets of its air and shipping carriers on the same excuse.

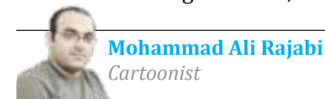
Iranian national carrier Iran Air and the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines have been hit with an assets freeze, while the Port Olya-3 cargo ship would not be allowed to enter any UK port, the UK Foreign Ministry said.

The European Union, Britain and the US had already imposed sanctions on prominent Iranian officials and entities, including Iran Air over the alleged delivery of missiles to Russia.

Restrictive measures against Iran came after the United States in September claimed that Iran provided Russia with Fath-360 close-range ballistic missiles as a boost to Russia's war against Ukraine.

Tehran, however, has repeatedly rejected the accusations, saying that remarks made by Ukrainian president about the missiles are quite clear that Iran has not delivered any missile to Russia.

In September, the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that there was no evidence yet that Russia had used Iranian ballistic missiles against Ukraine.



Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Time for respect...

Moreover, Iran's regional and international stature also compels it to defend its rights rather than succumb to what Iranian officials often refer to as "Western excessive demands". Iran perceives any concession under duress as a critical strategic mistake. It will not show

weakness toward Western powers, fully aware of how its actions are perceived by neighboring countries. For Iran, maintaining its reputation, dignity and sovereignty is paramount, rejecting any approach that resembles coercion or bullying.

It stands out a mile that the current approach of pres-

uring Iran is not working. After so many years of using intimidation, it is time for Western countries to try something different. Instead of continuing with the same tactics that have only led to more tensions, they need to focus on respecting Iran for a change! Real progress with Iran will come from honest dialogue

and mutual respect, not from trying to force a solution.

If the West genuinely wants to find common ground, it should move away from treating Iran as a passive subject of their "diplomatic efforts" and start engaging with it as an equal partner in negotiations. This is the only way to de-escalate!