

Iran, US at it again

Nuclear talks to restart soon
amid heightened tensions: *Report*

International Desk

Iran and the United States are likely to recommence nuclear negotiations in the coming days, semi-official news agency ISNA reported on Monday, as tensions are running high in West Asia amid a US military buildup in the Persian Gulf. ISNA said the negotiating delegations would be led by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff. Turkey is expected to host the talks, the agency added, after Araghchi traveled to the neighboring country on Friday at the invitation of Turkish officials who have offered to mediate between Tehran and Washington. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan is also expected to take part in the talks, ISNA said. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said earlier in

the day that Tehran was "reviewing and deciding" on the details of a diplomatic process including "a manner and a framework" for the upcoming talks. Foreign Minister Araghchi also said on Monday that Iran was ready for dialogue provided it took place on an "equal footing, respect and mutual interests," but maintained that "diplomacy is not compatible with intimidation and threats." He expressed hope to "see the results of diplomacy soon." US President Donald Trump claimed on Saturday that Tehran was "seriously talking" with Washington. "We could make a negotiated deal that would be satisfactory, with no nuclear weapons," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. Trump has threatened military action against Iran and ordered the dispatch of an aircraft carrier



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L) talks to Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, as he pays tribute to the late founder of the Islamic Republic in his mausoleum in southern Tehran on February 2, 2026.
● IRNA

group to the Middle East following nationwide deadly rioting last month, which the Iranian government says has been orchestrated from overseas. Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei warned on Sunday that any US aggression would set off a "regional war." Washington has said any deal with Iran must include a ban on uranium enrichment, the removal of already enriched uranium, limits on long-range missiles and a rollback of support for regional resistance groups, conditions that Tehran has rejected.

*FM spox:* Anti-Iran regional adventurism to have 'contagious' repercussions

International Desk

The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman warned on Monday that the regional countries must be aware of the consequences of any threats and acts of adventurism against the Islamic Republic. Esmail Baqaei raised the alarm at his weekly press conference in Tehran, following American media reports claiming that Saudi Defense Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman (KBS) had said in a private briefing in Washington that if President Donald Trump did not follow through on his threats against Iran, the move would "embolden" the Islamic Republic. "We have also seen these media reports. Iran and Saudi Arabia are two Muslim countries, and we have had a positive view of our brothers in the region. We believe that the countries of the region are well aware that any insecurity in the region and any threat against Iran will have contagious effects and consequences,"



Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei speaks at a weekly press briefing in Tehran on February 2, 2026.
● IRNA

Baqaei said. "The reason for the efforts of the regional countries in a collective action to prevent escalation of tension is precisely this consensus regarding the dangers inherent in any adventurous action against Iran." Stressing that the positions of countries cannot be evaluated solely based on a media report, the spokesman said, "We are in close contact with Saudi Arabia; in just the past few days, both our ambassador in Saudi Arabia and through the Saudi embassy in Tehran, discussions have taken place between our friends in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Sau-

di officials." Pointing to the existing contacts and interactions between Iran and the regional countries, especially Saudi Arabia, Baqaei said, "At the same time, I emphasize that we invite all countries in the region to seriously and carefully consider the regional situation and not allow parties who in no way wish for the good and welfare of the region to exploit the issues raised." The Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman also spoke about the formation of a common understanding among the regional countries with regard to the breakout of new conflicts.

"What we are observing is the formation of a common understanding among the countries in the region regarding a threat that concerns the entire region. The countries in the region have clearly understood that any escalation of tension against the Islamic Republic of Iran will have consequences beyond Iran's geographical borders," Baqaei said. "This is the nature and characteristic of any tension, that its effects will be contagious. For this reason, the countries in the region are striving to prevent the escalation of tension and contribute to strengthening peace and security in the West Asia region," he added. Tensions between Iran and the United States have hit a new high since the latter brought in what it calls a large "armada" of warships and destroyers to the Persian Gulf region in support of deadly riots prompted by national currency depreciation across Iran.

Senior official denies plan to transfer Iranian enriched uranium abroad

International Desk

A senior Iranian security official on Monday dismissed reports that highly enriched uranium could be shipped out of the country after Russia said it was ready to store Iran's stockpiles as a possible option to ease tensions. "Iranian officials have no intention of transferring enriched nuclear materials to any country," Ali Bagheri, deputy secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), said, according to Fars news agency. Bagheri added that any potential talks between Iran and the United States over the country's nuclear program would "not revolve around such an issue at all." The remarks came hours after Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia had long ago offered its services to process or store Iran's enriched uranium. Asked whether Russia was discussing with Iran and the United States the possibility of taking Iranian enriched uranium, Peskov said, "This topic has been on the agenda for a long time." He said Moscow was trying to de-escalate tensions around Iran "to the best of its ability" and remained in contact with all interested parties, Reuters reported. SNSC secretary Ali Larijani met Presi-



Iranian technicians work inside a uranium conversion facility outside Isfahan, Iran.
● GETTY IMAGES

dent Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Friday during a visit that coincided with rising tensions between Iran and the United States, amid media speculation that the issue of enriched material was on the agenda. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei told reporters on Monday that such speculation had been raised before. "Iran's enriched nuclear material is one of the issues that naturally would be determined in a negotiation," Baqaei said.

Art of hedging ...

Tools of implementation:
blending hard and soft power

Page 1 > Turkey's hedging is not merely diplomatic. The country employs assertive military power to achieve its goals. Military operations in Syria, Iraq, and Libya, along with decisive military support for Azerbaijan, send a clear message: Turkey is not reluctant to use force to protect its interests and is actively defining its own sphere of security influence. Alongside this, soft power based on Ottoman heritage, media diplomacy (the TRT World network), and the promotion of its model of "democratic conservatism" enhances its appeal in parts of the developing world.

Strategic risks: playing on both sides

This ambitious strategy is not without

dangers:

1. Distrust: Turkey risks being seen by the West as "unreliable" and by Russia and the East as a "mercenary ally."
2. Overstretch: Simultaneous involvement in multiple theatres (the Eastern Mediterranean, Syria, the Caucasus) could exhaust the country's economic and military resources.
3. Economic Fragility: High inflation and dependence on foreign investment constitute a critical vulnerability that could overshadow all diplomatic maneuvering.

Central power in the making

Turkey's hedging strategy is an ambitious gamble to redefine its identity and international standing. Erdogan and Turkey's foreign-policy architects

are not seeking a complete break with the West, nor are they willing to accept unquestioning subordination to it. By creating multiple, reciprocal dependencies, they aim to raise the cost for any hostile action against Turkey and carve out space for independent action. The future of this strategy depends on two key factors: domestic economic stability and Ankara's diplomatic skill in managing the inevitable tensions of this multi-faceted game. If successful, Turkey could become a model for middle powers with grand ambitions. If it fails, it may find itself caught in limbo—without a steadfast ally. In any case, Turkey offers the world a practical lesson: in an age of geopolitical turmoil, smart hedging can be a weapon for survival and relevance.



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