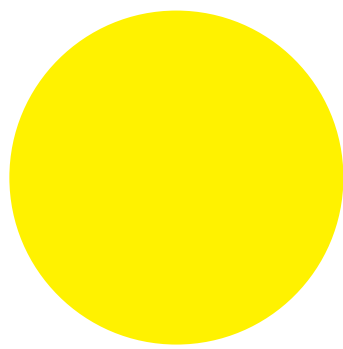


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The screen grab shows black smoke and flames rising from an oil tanker caught fire after it hit a mine while trying to leave the Strait of Hormuz on October 10, 2026.

Trump's unilateral approach limits mediating role in Iran dispute

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

The Kremlin has announced that Russian President Vladimir Putin, in coordination with Tehran, conveyed Iran's position to US President Donald Trump regarding the possibility of reaching an agreement to resolve the conflict. But what significance does Russia's involvement carry at a time when countries such as Qatar and Pakistan are also acting as mediators? Amir Ali Abolfath, an international affairs expert, told Iran Daily that the defining feature of the Trump administration is its unilateralism and its desire to resolve the Iran issue on its own. Given this approach, he said, even Russia is unlikely to be able to break the deadlock.



Amir Ali Abolfath

IRAN DAILY: At a time when countries such as Qatar and Pakistan are seeking to mediate between Tehran and Washington, what significance does the Russian president's role in conveying Iran's position to the United States carry?

ABOLFATH: Russia naturally carries greater weight in international relations than countries such as Qatar and Pakistan. Although relations between Russia and the West, as well as between Russia and the United States, are currently somewhat strained, Putin has managed to establish a good personal relationship with Trump, and perhaps this channel could help.

However, the problem between Iran and the United States is not a matter of mediation. The two countries' respective demands are so far apart that it does not seem likely that any country, even one as powerful as Russia or China, could help bridge the gap. Nevertheless, every available avenue should be explored. If Putin's

friendly relationship with Trump can be used to convey Iran's message directly to the US president, or if Putin can persuade Trump to change his position toward Iran, that should certainly be welcomed.

Personally, however, there is little reason to be optimistic that even Putin can make a difference. Trump intends to put Iran in a position where it must either surrender or prepare for war. Iran, for its part, is not currently prepared to surrender. Therefore, the likelihood of war is very high.

Given that Russia had previously expressed its readiness to cooperate in transferring Iran's enriched uranium, how likely is it that the nuclear issue was part of Tehran's message to Washington? Could there be a division of diplomatic responsibilities between Russia's potential role in the nuclear file and regional countries' efforts to advance an understanding on issues such as the Strait of Hor-

muz and ending the conflict?

It is unclear whether this proposal is fully acceptable to both Iran and the United States. I have no indication that Iran has agreed to transfer all 400 kilograms of its 60-percent-enriched uranium to Russia. As far as I know, Iran's position is that some of this uranium should be diluted.

The Americans do not appear particularly keen on this arrangement either. The United States wants to remove this capability from Iran directly and on its own terms. It seems the Americans want to compel Iran to hand over the uranium voluntarily, with US oversight in place. Washington is concerned that if the uranium goes to Russia, the Russians might find a way to return it to Iran in the future, given their strained relations with the West and close ties with Tehran.

As for a division of diplomatic responsibilities, it must be said that this will not break the deadlock. It would be a mistake to assume that each of these countries can work

a miracle.

Ultimately, everyone is making an effort. Any country that has relations with both Iran and the United States will eventually try to find a way to resolve the issue. Yet no one has succeeded over the past 24 or 25 years. It is unlikely that anyone will succeed unless Iran and the United States change their positions.

What does the timing of Iran's position being conveyed to Washington, alongside the Moscow-Washington agreement to supply diesel to the US and global markets, tell us about the two countries' priorities under current circumstances?

Moreover, the diesel agreement may have been blown out of proportion. This, too, is characteristic of Donald Trump. During an election campaign, he needs to be able to say that he has accomplished something and that diesel prices will come down.

The details of the agreement that have been disclosed do not sug-

gest that Russia intends to export enough diesel to significantly increase market supply and drive prices down. The first shipment is said to involve 500,000 tons of diesel, an amount equivalent to half a day's consumption in the United States.

It is unclear whether such a relatively small volume could alter the dynamics of the energy market to the extent that it would justify saying Russia has abandoned Iran. Russia itself is currently facing a diesel shortage and is reportedly importing diesel from India. In addition, the entire arrangement depends on Ukraine halting its attacks on Russian refineries, which it is not doing. This is precisely why Trump has become angry and said that Ukraine's president must step aside.

Beyond that, Ukraine and Europe are also unhappy with the agreement. Such arrangements are unlikely to hold up unless the Ukraine issue is resolved in a fundamental way.

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