

Fox News Exclusive: Trump delivers stern warning to Iran after calling off retaliatory military strike

President Trump, after calling off a military strike on Iran following the downing of an American drone last month, delivered a stern warning to the regime during an interview with Fox News.

Speaking exclusively with Tucker Carlson, Trump said he “built up a lot of great capital” after his decision — but said that means “if something should happen, we’re in a position to do far worse by not doing it.”

He quickly added, “But, hopefully, we don’t have to do anything.”

The president’s comments were made before it was reported Iran has exceeded the threshold for the Islamic Republic’s low-enriched uranium stockpile agreed upon in the 2015 nuclear deal.

IRAN SURPASSES URANIUM STOCKPILE LIMIT SET BY NUCLEAR DEAL, STATE MEDIA SAYS

On Monday, a source told Fars News Agency that U.N. inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) weighed Iran’s stockpile of uranium and said it surpassed the 660-pound limit.

Iran previously announced its intent to pass the limit unless certain demands were met by June 27. A spokesperson for the country’s Atomic Energy Organization said on June 17 that Iran already had quadrupled its production of low-enriched uranium — which can be used in a nuclear reactor, but not in a bomb.

The IAEA confirmed on Monday that Iran had brought through the limit. IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano told the agency’s board of governors that it had verified the development.

Monday afternoon, the White House released a statement outlining how the U.S. will continue to pressure Iran.

AIR FORCE FIGHTER PLANES SENT TO PERSIAN GULF AMID HEIGHTENED TENSIONS WITH IRAN

“Maximum pressure on the Iranian regime will continue until its leaders alter their course of action,” White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham said in a statement. “The regime must end its nuclear ambitions and its malign behavior.”

During his interview with Carlson, Trump revealed in the praise he was given for not going through with the retaliatory strike.

“I was given a lot of credit by most people. A lot of people gave me of credit,” the president said after Carlson asked about the pullback.

“A lot of people said that was a great presidential moment, which was, you know, rather shocking to hear.

SENATE FAILS TO APPROVE IRAN RESOLUTION, AFTER LONGEST VOTE IN CHAMBER’S HISTORY

“So, they shot down an unmanned drone. And, they claim it was over their territory, which it wasn’t, but they would say that, so on top of it, they’ll say, unmanned and over their territory, then we go in.

“Before I sent them out, they had to give me everything I wanted to know by seven o’clock. They walked in, they gave me everything but they didn’t tell me how many people would die. How many Iranians — I know a lot of Iranians from New York City, and they’re great people. They’re all great people. Were all great, right? Iranian or not.”

Trump continued, explaining why he canceled the plan after learning at least 150 people could be killed.

“I said, ‘I don’t like that. I don’t like it,’ and I stopped it,” he said. “I did — we didn’t send them out, you know, there was a little incorrect reporting. It was like we sent them out and we pulled them, but we didn’t do that. I didn’t — I made the final decision not to do it.

“I built up a lot of great capital, and if something should happen, we’re in a position to do far worse by not doing it. But, hopefully, we don’t have to do anything.”

Trump then took aim at former President Barack Obama’s nuclear deal with the country and reaffirmed his commitment to stop Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

“Iran now, since we terminated that horrible deal, which was a truly horrible deal, and, you know, you and I aren’t so different in terms of fighting, we want to have peace,” Trump told Carlson.

“We want to build our roads and build our schools and build all the things we want to build. But, we can’t let Iran have a nuclear weapon... you can’t let Iran have a nuclear weapon, and you can’t let certain other countries have nuclear weapons. It’s too devastating.”

Iran last month had threatened to exceed the stockpile limit if world powers failed to negotiate new terms for the nuclear accord, which was engineered by the Obama administration in July 2015 but significantly weakened when the Trump administration withdrew in May 2018 and restored crippling sanctions. Many European countries repeatedly have urged Iran to abide by the deal.

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Under terms of the multinational nuke deal, Iran can keep a stockpile of no more than 660 pounds of low-enriched uranium and the country pledged to stay within those limits if Britain, France, Germany and the rest of the European Union followed through with plans to provide Iran access to international banking systems.

Iran maintains its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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