

Iran Could Have A Nuclear Weapon By This Time Next Year



Key Point: The European Union, China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Iran remain parties to the deal. America is not.

The commission overseeing the 2015 deal limiting Iran's nuclear program is "treating this issue with the seriousness it deserves," said Jackie Wolcott, the U.S. ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Iran's effort to shorten the time to produce a nuke "does not pose an immediate risk," wrote Kelsey Davenport, an expert with the Arms Control Association in the United States.

"Currently, due to restrictions put in place by the nuclear deal, the United States estimates that timeline at 12 months," Davenport explained in a July 2019 assessment.

But the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal, a signature accomplishment of former U.S. president Barack Obama, is in danger of

collapsing following current president Donald Trump's 2017 decision to withdraw the United States from the deal's oversight.

Trump shortly thereafter reinstated economic sanctions targeting Iran that the Obama administration had lifted as an incentive for Iran to agree to limits on its nuclear program.

Trump's sanctions made it more likely Iran would abandon diplomacy and develop an atomic bomb. Trump is not "deserving to exchange messages with," Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei stated in June 2019.

Trump abandoned the Iran deal to spite Obama, according to a leaked memo written by the United Kingdom's former ambassador to the United States. Kim Darroch in 2018 described Trump's move as an act of "diplomatic vandalism."

The European Union, China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Iran remain parties to the deal. As recently as June 2019 Iran had abided by all the deal's limits on centrifuges, heavy water, and enriched fissible materials.

More recently, Tehran has warned that it would exceed the JCPOA's caps, Davenport explained.

According to a May 31, [2019] report from the International Atomic Energy Agency on Iran's implementation of the nuclear deal, Iran moved closer to the caps on enriched uranium and heavy water set by the deal, but did not exceed them.

The agency reported that as of May 20, Iran had stockpiled 174 kilograms of uranium enriched to 3.67 percent uranium-235, which is less than the 202 kilograms permitted by the JCPOA. In its previous report in February, the IAEA reported that the stockpile was 168 kilograms. Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, said on June 17 that Iran was quadrupling its uranium-enrichment capacity and would breach the limit set by the deal within 10 days.

Exceeding the limit of uranium enriched to 3.67-percent U-235 would reduce the so-called "breakout time," or the time it takes Iran to produce enough nuclear material for a weapon, but it does not pose an immediate risk. Currently, due to restrictions put in place by the nuclear deal, the United States

estimates that timeline at 12 months. Any reduction in the 12-month timeline will depend on how quickly Iran continues to enrich and stockpile uranium. Tehran would need to produce about 1,050 kilograms of uranium hexafluoride gas enriched to 3.67-percent U-235 to produce enough weapons-grade material (more than 90 percent-enriched U-235) for one bomb.

Kamalvandi also said that Iran was increasing its production of heavy water and would exceed the JCPOA's 130-metric-ton cap in two-and-a-half months. According to the IAEA, Iran had 125 metric tons as of May 26.

Kamalvandi also said that Iran within two and a half months could exceed the JCPOA's 130-ton cap on heavy water. Iran as of May 26, 2019, had 125 metric tons of heavy water, which is used to moderate reactions in nuclear reactors.

The IAEA also reported that Iran had installed 33 IR-6 centrifuges at its Natanz plant. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani announced in April 2019 that the country would install another 20 IR-6s at the same facility.

Citing the number of centrifuges, Wolcott on June 11, 2019, insisted that Iran "is now reported to be in clear violation of the deal."

But that's not necessarily true, Davenport wrote. "Other countries still party to the agreement argue that Iran's actions fall into a gray area not explicitly covered by the accord."

Former U.K. ambassador to the United States Darroch, who resigned following the leak of his memo in July 2019, claimed the Trump administration backed out of the Iran deal without any plan for dealing with the consequences.

"They can't articulate any 'day-after' strategy; and contacts with State Department this morning suggest no sort of plan for reaching out to partners and allies, whether in Europe or the region," Darroch wrote.

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