

Iran: Exiting nuclear pact one of 'many options' after US sanctions



AP Photo: FILE- Iranian lawmakers burn two pieces of papers representing the U.S. flag and the nuclear deal as they chant slogans against the U.S. at the parliament in Tehran, Iran, Wednesday, May 9, 2018.

The US seeks to reduce Iranian oil exports to zero in push to limit the country's global influence

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has said leaving the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is one of the "many options" Tehran has to retaliate against US sanctions, state media reported Sunday.

The United States has imposed a raft of sanctions against the Islamic republic since President Donald Trump withdrew last year from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal with world powers.

On Monday Washington announced an end to sanction waivers for buyers of Iranian crude oil, and earlier this month the US declared Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards a "foreign terrorist organisation".

"The Islamic republic has many options... (leaving) the NPT is one of them," Zarif said in remarks to Iranian reporters in New York aired by state television.

State news agency IRNA said Zarif was asked why he had not touted leaving the nuclear treaty as one of Iran's possible reactions during his trip as he had done so previously.

"The country's officials are deliberating" the different options and measures, Zarif replied, adding that the possibility of leaving the NPT was among those options. He did not list the other options.

Iran has branded the US sanctions "illegal" and Zarif warned on Wednesday that there would be consequences should Iran be barred from selling its oil.

The 2015 Iran nuclear deal with six world powers — Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States and Germany — had given the Islamic republic sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program.



Hamed Jafarnejad (FARS NEWS/AFP) – Iran's elite Revolutionary Guard attacks a vessel during a previous drill in the Strait of Hormuz in 2015

Separately, Iran's top general warned Sunday Tehran could close the strategic Strait of Hormuz shipping route if it faces more "hostility", news agency ISNA said, as the US tightens up sanctions.

"We are not after closing the Strait of Hormuz but if the hostility of enemies increase, we will be able to do so," armed forces chief of staff Mohammad Bagheri told semi-official ISNA."

Also if our oil does not go through the strait, other countries' oil will certainly not cross the strait, too," he added.

The statement came after Washington said on Monday it would start imposing sanctions on countries such as India, China and Turkey that buy Iranian oil.

Eight countries were initially given six-month reprieves after the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear accord.

Iranian officials have repeatedly warned the Islamic republic could shut down the strait, a vital shipping lane for international oil supplies, should it find its national interests or security threatened.

"We believe Iran will continue to sell its oil ... (and) use the Strait of Hormuz. But if the United States takes the crazy measure of trying to prevent us from doing that, then it should be prepared for the consequences," foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday.

"It is in our vital national security interest to keep the Persian Gulf open, to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. We have done that in the past and we will continue to do that in the future," he added.

The report comes several days after Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei called the end of oil sanction waivers by the United States a "hostile measure" that "won't be left without response.



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U.S.'s efforts to boycott the sale of Iran's oil won't get them anywhere. We will export our oil as much as we need and we intend. They should know that their hostile measure won't be left without a response. Iranian nation does not sit idle in the face of animosities.

"US efforts to boycott the sale of Iran's oil won't get them anywhere. We will export our oil as much as we need and we intend," his official English-language Twitter account said.

The White House announcement last week declared that any country importing Iranian oil will no longer be exempt from sanctions if they do not end trade partnerships by May 2, in a renewed effort to heighten pressure on the Islamic Republic.

The aggressive move is the latest in the United States' no-holds-barred move to crush the economy and scale back the clerical regime's influence by seeking to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero.

Source:

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