

Trump administration plans “flood” of sanctions on Iran by Jan. 20



Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Photo: Patrick Semansky/Pool/AFP via Getty Images

The Trump administration, in coordination with Israel and several Gulf states, is pushing a plan to slap a long string of new sanctions on Iran in the 10 weeks left until Joe Biden’s inauguration on Jan. 20, two Israeli sources briefed on the effort told me.

Driving the news: The Trump administration’s envoy for Iran Elliott Abrams arrived in Israel on Sunday and met Prime Minister Netanyahu and National Security adviser Meir Ben-Shabbat to discuss the sanctions plan.

- Abrams will meet on Monday with Minister of Defense Benny Gantz and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi to brief them on the plan.
- Abrams didn’t respond to a request for comment.

Why it matters: The Trump administration believes such a “flood” of sanctions will increase pressure on the Iranians and make it harder for the Biden administration to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, the Israeli sources told me.

Behind the scenes: In the last several weeks, the Trump administration — with the encouragement and assistance of part of the Israeli diplomatic and security establishment — has prepared a “target bank” of Iranian entities that will be sanctioned.

- Abrams said in a closed briefing several days ago that the Trump administration wants to announce a new set of sanctions on Iran every week until Jan. 20, a source who was privy to the briefing told me.
- The Israeli sources told me the planned sanctions are not connected to the Iranian nuclear program — such sanctions are more likely to be canceled by a Biden administration and open the door to reviving the 2015 nuclear deal.
- Instead, the goal is to impose sanctions on Iran that are connected to its ballistic missile program, Iranian assistance to terror organizations, and Iranian human rights violations.

What they’re saying: “The goal is to slap as many sanctions as possible on Iran until Jan. 20,” an Israeli source briefed on the plan told me.

What’s next: Abrams will travel from Israel to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh to discuss the sanctions plan.

- The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are the two main allies the Trump administration and the Israeli government have against Iran, and both are very concerned by the Biden administration’s future Iran policy.
- Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is arriving in Israel on Nov. 18, Israeli and U.S. officials tell me. Pompeo will likely visit other countries in the region as well. His trip is also going to focus on the Trump administration’s last-ditch effort to increase pressure on Iran.

Source:

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