



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on February 18, 2026

Diplomacy or Deception? U.S. Builds Firepower While Iran Fortifies

The last time the United States built up a massive armada in another part of the world, it ended up attacking Venezuela, nabbing its head of state, and taking control of its government. The White House appears to be preparing for its next war act, this time against Iran.

In the meantime, U.S. and Iranian officials have been meeting to supposedly strike a deal that would avert military confrontation.

On Tuesday, U.S. envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner met in Geneva with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. According to Araghchi, "The initial meetings resulted in 'an understanding on main principles' between the US and Iran," [per](#) reports. The two parties have not reached an agreement, but "the path has started."

The director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Rafael Grossi, also traveled to Geneva. His involvement was related to Iran's nuclear ambitions.

No Nukes

Vice President JD Vance said during an appearance on Fox News that the White House is mainly concerned with preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. "The United States has certain red lines," Vance said, adding:

Our primary interest here is we don't want Iran to get a nuclear weapon. We don't want nuclear proliferation. If Iran gets a nuclear weapon, there are a lot of other regimes — some friendly, some not so friendly — who'd get nuclear weapons after them. That would be a disaster for the American people because then you have these crazy regimes all over the world with the most dangerous weapons in the world. And that's one of the things the president said he's going to prevent.

"Our primary interest here is we don't want Iran to get a nuclear weapon. We don't want nuclear proliferation," says [@VP](#).

"We would very much like, as [@POTUS](#) has said, to resolve this through a conversation and a diplomatic negotiation, but [@POTUS](#) has all options on the table."
pic.twitter.com/DNTDGLFeVA



AP Images
F/A-18 Super Hornet on the USS Gerald R. Ford



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Apparently, no one is taking seriously President Donald Trump's [comments](#) last summer that American strikes set back the Iranian nuclear program "basically decades." Judging by this military buildup, not even Trump is taking his comments seriously. It hasn't been a year, much less a decade, and we're back in the same position, mulling over bombing a country halfway around the world that poses little to no threat to the American homeland.

Vance touched on how Tuesday's negotiations went:

In some ways, it went well; they agreed to meet afterwards. But in other ways, it was very clear that the president has set some red lines that the Iranians are not yet willing to actually acknowledge and work through.

Vance added that the president "reserves the ability to say when he thinks that diplomacy has reached its natural end," a reminder that the American system of governance is long removed from the days when the decision to take military action was rightfully recognized as one that only Congress could make.

Military Buildup

Nevertheless, American firepower is amassing in the Middle East. The Navy's largest and scariest carrier strike group, the USS *Gerald R. Ford*, is on its way to the region now. It will join the USS *Abraham Lincoln* and its accompanying guided-missile destroyers, which arrived there more than two weeks ago. [According](#) to reports, "U.S. forces already have shot down an Iranian drone that approached the Lincoln on the same day last week that Iran tried to stop a U.S.-flagged ship in the Strait of Hormuz."

Meanwhile, Iran is preparing for war. "Tehran is deploying its forces, dispersing decision-making authority, fortifying its nuclear sites and expanding its crackdown on domestic dissent," *The Wall Street Journal* [summarized](#) Wednesday. A Reuters [report](#) emphasized the preparations Iran is making to military and/or nuclear sites:

Satellite images show that Iran has recently built a concrete shield over a new facility at a sensitive military site and covered it in soil, experts say, advancing work at a location reportedly bombed by Israel in 2024 amid tensions with the U.S. Images also show that Iran has buried tunnel entrances at a nuclear site bombed by the U.S. during Israel's 12-day war with Iran last year, fortified tunnel entrances near another, and has repaired missile bases struck in the conflict.

Why Iran?

Iranian leaders maintain that they have a right to pursue nuclear energy. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [said](#) in an X post: "Peaceful nuclear industry is not for war; it is for running the country — for agriculture, for treatment and healthcare, and for everything that depends on energy. What does it have to do with you Americans?"

Khamenei poses an interesting question. Why *is* America sticking its nose in the affairs of countries on the other side of the planet?



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For starters, the people in charge of the U.S. government see themselves as stewards of the entire globe. It is an imperialistic mindset. There's a reason the world is peppered with more than 700 American military installations of some form, far more than any other country.

Israeli Influence

Another reason is Israel.

Israeli leadership has been crying wolf about the Iranian nuclear threat for decades. It has been pressuring its U.S. ally for almost as long to attack Iran. Last summer's strikes were, according to several reports, the result of Israeli influence prevailing over the noninterventionist voices in the Trump administration. If the United States attacks Iran again, it will be with pressure from Israel. Axios recently [reported](#) that, while Trump wants to cut a deal, "the Israeli prime minister has privately argued with Trump that any agreement is futile, a stance analysts argue is designed to drag the US into a direct war with Tehran."

Former CIA analyst and commentator Larry Johnson estimates that about one-third of the entire Air Force has been deployed to the Middle East. Best-case-scenario is this is an intimidation ploy.

New Alliance

During a recent conversation with Judge Andrew Napolitano, Johnson brought up an noteworthy recent development between Iran, Russia, and China. On January 30, the three nations signed a strategic agreement covering economic, political, defense, and security ties. [According](#) to the U.K.-based Middle East Monitor, the agreement "explicitly combines the three powers in a coordinated framework, aligning them on issues ranging from nuclear sovereignty and economic cooperation to military coordination and diplomatic strategy." The agreement, however, claims the Monitor, does not "constitute a formal mutual defence treaty akin to NATO's Article 5, obligating one to defend the others militarily."

Russia's TASS confirmed the pact. Citing Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, it [reported](#) the agreement includes "transport, energy, oil and gas, agriculture, food industry, defense and cooperation in the security sphere."

Johnson believes this latest pact is a little more robust than other similar agreements these three allies have made in the past. This is an attempt by them to work together to protect each other. He said Russia and China have already been "pouring in an enormous amount of support." For example, China deployed to Iran radar to detect stealth aircraft, "like the F-35, like the B-2 Bomber." Also, Iran has missiles capable of shooting those planes down, Johnson claimed.

Is This War?

Will bombing Iran trigger a wider war? That's a serious question the White House and the American public should consider.

Johnson predicts the United States will hit Iran next week. For the duration of this week, he said, "they'll keep up the pretense of a negotiation."

A few questions the American people should consider as this plays out. Is the United States genuinely dedicated to reaching a peaceful resolution? Is it reasonable to ask a sovereign country to give up the option of nuclear energy on its own soil completely, or demand that it basically cripple its ballistic missile program in a world filled with enemies? And is there any reason outside of "might makes right"



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that justifies the United States being the arbiter of who gets to have dangerous weapons and who doesn't? Lastly, how does going all the way to the other side of the planet to attack another country align with the Founding Fathers' foreign policy of nonintervention?



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