



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on October 10, 2012

Obama Signs Executive Order to Tighten Sanctions on Iran

On Tuesday, President Obama signed another executive order that would tighten sanctions on Iran over its nuclear enrichment program. The White House is touting the latest measure as “unprecedented pressure on Iran’s economy.” [Executive Order 140](#) implements an Iran sanctions law that was enacted in August.



President Obama signed the Iran Threat Reduction and Syria Human Rights Act of 2012 in [August](#) into law. Tuesday’s executive order creates a framework to implement those sanctions, and delegates the Secretaries of Treasury and State to enforce it.

National Security Council spokesman Tommy Vietor said in a statement:

It builds on the sanctions that have been imposed on the Iranian government, and provides for additional sanctions on activities related to Iran’s energy and financial sectors, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism and activities related to human rights abuses by Iran and Syria, among other things.

“The onus is on Iran to abide by its international obligations with respect to its nuclear program. If the Iranian government continues its defiance, there should be no doubt that the United States and our partners will continue to tighten our sanctions and impose increasing consequences,” he added.

Executive Order 140 expands an already large list of those targeted by Iran sanctions while closing loopholes and increasing penalties.

The Hill reports:

Those targeted include anyone who works in Iran’s petroleum sectors or provides goods, services, infrastructure, or technology to Iran’s oil and natural gas sector, those who insure or re-insure investments in Iran’s oil sector and those who transport refined petroleum to Iran. It also targets Iranian and Syrian officials involved in human-rights abuses.

This law also tries to stop Iran from repatriating revenue from oil, to further destabilize its currency and make more sanctions mandatory.

According to Vietor, “The sanctions effort has produced profound and demonstrable results.”

But not everyone is in agreement that sanctions are the best approach to Iran. Texas Republican Ron Paul, former GOP presidential contender, has called sanctions against Iran “terrible” for both the United States and its allies.

“I voted against them and I think they’re terrible and I think it’s going to hurt the people who are trying to overthrow [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad. People, when they’re attacked from the outside and



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made to hurt, become more nationalistic,” Paul said on Fox News’s *On the Record*.

The *Wall Street Journal* notes that Iran’s economy is [struggling](#) with a currency crisis “due in part to U.S. sanctions.” In fact, Tehran has censored its websites that provide the foreign currency rates for its money. Iran’s rial has lost almost 25 percent against the dollar in just one week.

“The rial fluctuated between 35,500 to 40,000 to the dollar on Tuesday, according to money exchangers in Tehran. It was down from 34,200 to a dollar just a day earlier on Monday and 23,000 on Sept. 24,” reports the *Wall Street Journal*.

Likewise, Iran’s economy is suffering from inflation, which is estimated at about 55 percent compared to last year, and is likely to rise as prices align with the new currency rates.

Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced for the first time on Tuesday that the U.S. and European Union embargo on Iran’s oil are hurting Iran’s economy. “Two elements have joined hands to pressure the people of Iran. One is external and one is internal,” he said in live televised remarks to reporters.

Economists indicate that the sanctions have significantly reduced Iran’s oil income from \$85 billion to \$42 billion, and as a result, Iran has lower reserves with which to conduct its operations that would support the rial.

According to Paul, supporters of sanctions are “isolationists.”

Paul contends, “I think what we should do is let Israel deal with it. They have hundreds of nuclear missiles. They took care of Iraq’s nuclear power plant back in the ‘80s. I defended them for it.”

Likewise, Democratic Representative Dennis Kucinich has said that sanctions against Iran are an act of war.

“It’s likely that any negotiated deal that would prevent a nuclear-armed Iran would provide for... uranium enrichment for peaceful purposes under the framework of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Weapons Treaty, with strict safeguards and inspections. So we’re taking a path here that guarantees that we’re put on a glide slope right to war,” Kucinich said in August when the sanctions law was passed.

“When you put sanctions on a country, it’s an act of war, and that’s what this is all about,” Paul said. “The first thing you do when war breaks out between two countries, is you put sanctions on a country, you blockade the country. So this is an act of war.”

But Kucinich and Paul remain the few voices in Congress [opposed](#) to the sanctions.

Executive Order 140 comes just in time for the next presidential debate, as Iran policy remains a major topic in this presidential campaign.

GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney has accused President Obama of being too soft on Iran and has charged Obama with a failure to properly show support for Israel. Romney contends that Obama should be clearer in his approach with Iran and should assert that the United States will not be lenient on Iran’s nuclear program.

During an interview with *Face the Nation*, Romney said this regarding his stance on Iran:

I can assure you if I’m president, the Iranians will have no question but that I will be willing to take military action if necessary to prevent them from becoming a nuclear threat to the world. I don’t



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believe at this stage, therefore, if I'm president that we need to have a war powers approval or special authorization for military force. *The president has that capacity now.* I understand that some in the Senate for instance have written letters to the president indicating you should know that a containment strategy is unacceptable. We cannot survive a course of action which would include a nuclear Iran we must be willing to take any and all actions. [Emphasis added.]

The debate is set to take place on Tuesday, October 16 in Hempstead, New York, followed by a strictly foreign policy debate, scheduled for October 22 in Boca Raton, Florida.

Photo: Previous sanctions — President Barack Obama arrived in the East Room of the White House on July 1, 2010, to sign the Iran Sanctions Bill imposing tough new sanctions against

Iran because of that country's alleged ambitions to become a nuclear power: AP Images



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