



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on March 12, 2022

Russian Sanctions Demands Put Iran Nuclear Talks on “Pause”

Deliberations intended to restore the controversial nuclear deal between the United States and Iran [went on “pause”](#) Friday in response to Russian demands for relief from sanctions currently targeting its war with Ukraine.

So far, negotiators have not specified when the months-long talks in Vienna will continue. On Friday, diplomats said they were close to devising a roadmap for the United States to rejoin the accord it walked away from in 2018 under President Donald Trump.



simon2579/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images

Josep Borrell, the European Union’s foreign policy chief, merely stated that the pause was caused by “external factors,” but it appeared the issue was primarily the Russian demand.

“The real issue for this pause here is what Russia has thrown on the table, which is essentially a grenade in the middle of the negotiations,” said Henry Rome, deputy head of research at the Eurasia Group.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said recently that he wanted “guarantees at least at the level of the secretary of state” that America’s sanctions would not interfere with Moscow-Tehran relations.

U.S. officials have tried to downplay the effect of the demand on the Vienna talks, though things came to a swift stall following a tweet from Borrell on Friday.

“A pause in (hashtag)ViennaTalks is needed, due to external factors. A final text is essentially ready and on the table,” Borrell wrote. “As coordinator, I will, with my team, continue to be in touch with all #JCPOA participants and the U.S. to overcome the current situation and to close the agreement.”

JCPOA, or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, is the formal name of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

“Almost everything is done,” EU negotiator Enrique Mora said after meeting with Iranian officials on Friday. “We are almost at the limit of negotiating footnotes.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh said the pause “could be a momentum for resolving any remaining issue” ahead of restoring the deal.

Meanwhile, U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price said Friday that negotiators are “still working through a number, a very small number, but still a number of what are undoubtedly difficult issues.” Yet he emphasized that America had “no intention of offering Russia anything new or specific as it relates to the (Ukraine) sanctions.”

As of February 19, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) says Iran’s stockpile of all enriched uranium was nearly 3,200 kilograms (7,055 pounds), with some has been enriched up to 60% purity. This is just a short technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90%. Iran has also stopped the IAEA



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from accessing its surveillance camera footage and has resumed enrichment at Fordo.

Advocates of the Iran deal argue that by relieving sanctions on Iran and allowing the regime to put its crude oil and natural gas on the market, energy prices for the west could go down. The Biden administration blames high U.S. gas prices on the war in Ukraine, although the price of gas was already surging prior to that since Biden took office and killed the Keystone XL Pipeline.

To alleviate American motorists, the White House has not only looked to Iran, but [Venezuela and Saudi Arabia](#)

The pending terms of the new Iran deal have some policy experts concerned about the national security implications for the United States.

Gabriel Noronha at Tablet magazine [states](#) that “[m]ultiple career officials view these capitulations as so detrimental to U.S. national security that they contacted me requesting that I rapidly share details of these concessions with Congress and the public in an effort to stop them.”

Noronha wrote:

Iran is set to get access to a massive windfall of cash: My latest estimate (derived from figures declassified during my tenure at the State Department) is \$90 billion in access to foreign exchange reserves, and then a further \$50-\$55 billion in extra revenue each year from higher oil and petrochemical exports, with no restrictions on how or where the money can be spent.

Personally, the most troubling transfer of funds will be the \$7 billion ransom payment the United States is preparing to pay for the release of four Americans from an Iranian jail. Now, let me be clear: I would be extremely glad to bring these Americans back home safely as quickly as possible. They are innocent victims who, along with their families, have suffered unjustly for far too long. But make no mistake: Biden’s payment will only supercharge Iran’s hostage-taking industry.

Will the Biden administration use the cries of Russian aggression as a pretext for cementing ties with worse regimes throughout the globe?



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