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## **MERKEL MAKES LAST DITCH EFFORT TO SAVE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL**

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday (2 May) that the nuclear deal with Iran should not be cancelled but its negotiating framework needed to be broadened.

Trump gave Britain, France and Germany a 12 May deadline to fix what he views as the deals flaws – its failure to address Irans ballistic missile program, the terms by which inspectors visit suspect Iranian sites, and sunset clauses under which some of its terms expire – or he will reimpose US sanctions.

The pact between Iran and six major powers – Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States – was among former US President Barack Obamas signature foreign policies but has been described by Trump as one of the worst deals I have ever witnessed.

In contrast, the EU position is that there is no need to renegotiate the Iranian nuclear deal, and that the 2015 agreement is delivering.

### **Mogherini: No need to renegotiate Iran nuclear deal**

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said Wednesday (20 September) that there was no need to renegotiate the Iranian nuclear deal, insisting it was delivering despite US demands to re-open the agreement.

While European officials continue to work toward such a fix, they believe the odds are against reaching one.

One of the main sticking points has to do with the sunsets, where the United States in effect wishes to find a way to extend some of the limits on Irans nuclear program beyond their expiration dates under the agreement.

The source familiar with the debate said US negotiators are hamstrung by the fact that they do not really know where Trumps red line is and so they cannot tell the Europeans what would secure Trumps blessing.

Technically, Trump must decide by 12 May whether to renew waivers suspending some of the US sanctions on Iran. One of the White House officials who spoke on condition of anonymity said it was possible Trump will end up with a decision that is not a full pullout but was unable to describe what that might look like.

Trump could refuse to renew the waivers but give new US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo time to negotiate more with the Europeans, exploiting the deals dispute resolution mechanism or the time before the most draconian sanctions take effect.

Several sources familiar with the negotiations said that if Trump pulls out, a question for the Europeans will be whether this would be the start of a much harder US line toward Iran, including military confrontation.

The Europeans are not keen to be dragged into a regional conflict by the US, said one source familiar with the talks.

Two US intelligence officials said they were particularly concerned about Iranian retaliation in harder-to-trace actions such as cyber-attacks on the United States or its allies and attacks on soft targets by people without obvious ties to Tehran.

Such attacks are considered more likely than actions that might trigger a US military response against Iranian nuclear and military targets.

### **Netanyahu stages show**

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave details on Monday of what he said was evidence of a secret Iranian nuclear weapons programme, in a bid to encourage the United States to pull out this month of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.

Roderich Kiesewetter, a senior lawmaker in Merkels party, said Netanyahus presentation included nothing new so far beyond information released by the IAEA in a 2015 assessment of the Iranian nuclear programme.

He urged the United States to stick to the Iran deal.

Its important that Pompeo as the new US secretary of state does not just confirm Netanyahus perspective, but that the IAEA gets access to all the Israeli material and can assess it, he said. Only this would allow a credible reassessment of the situation – if necessary at all.

The Iranian religious and political leadership remains dangerous. But repeating what is already known doesnt move us forward, he said.

### **Trump has decided**

Trump has all but decided to withdraw from the 2015 Iran nuclear accord by 12 May but exactly how he will do so remains unclear, two White House officials and a source familiar with the administrations internal debate said on Wednesday.

There is a chance Trump might choose to keep the United States in the international pact under which Iran agreed to curb its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief, in part because of alliance maintenance with France and to save face for French President Emmanuel Macron, who met Trump last week and urged him to stay in, the source said.

### **Trump, Macron call for 'new' nuclear deal with Iran**

US President Donald Trump and French counterpart Emmanuel Macron called for a new deal with Iran Tuesday (24 April), looking beyond divisions over a landmark nuclear accord that now hangs in the balance.

A decision by Trump to end US sanctions relief would all but sink the agreement and could trigger a backlash by Iran, which could resume its nuclear arms program or punish US allies in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon, diplomats said.

The White House official said Trump was most of the way there toward pulling out of the deal but he hasn't made the decision and that he seems poised to do it but until a decision is made by this president it is not final.

Top aides are not seeking aggressively to talk Trump out of withdrawal because he seems intent on it, a second White House official said.

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