

Obama speech on Iran: Collapse of nuclear deal will mean war

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Defending the nuclear accord reached last month with Tehran, President Barack Obama said Wednesday that congressional blockage of the deal would rapidly lead to war against Iran.

In a chilling passage of the speech delivered at American University in Washington, DC, Obama declared: “Congressional rejection of this deal leaves any US administration that is absolutely committed to preventing Iran from getting a nuclear weapon with one option, another war in the Middle East. I say this not to be provocative, I am stating a fact...”

“Does anyone really doubt that the same voices now raised against this deal will be demanding that whoever is president bomb those nuclear facilities?... So let's not mince words. The choice we face is ultimately between diplomacy or some form of war. Maybe not tomorrow, maybe not three months from now, but soon.”

These words were the centerpiece of an address aimed at recruiting a sufficient number of Democratic congressmen and senators to sustain a presidential veto against a virtually certain vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate to scuttle the agreement when Congress returns from its summer recess on September 8.

Obama's speech was an exercise in hypocrisy and deceit. The agreement reached last month between Iran and the so-called P5 + 1 (US, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany) provides for the suspension of the most onerous sanctions against Tehran in exchange for sweeping concessions by Iran, including acceptance of an inspection regime over the country's civilian nuclear program of historically unprecedented intrusiveness. It also includes a so-called “snap back” provision that allows Washington to claim that Iran is in breach of the agreement and quickly reimpose sanctions, including an oil embargo, that have

devastated the country's economy.

Obama framed his response to opponents of the deal, including virtually all Republican members of Congress, a section of Democrats, the Israeli government and influential pro-Israel organizations in the US, and media organizations headed by the *Wall Street Journal*, as a commitment to diplomacy and the peaceful resolution of international disputes, in opposition to war hawks who demand unilateral US military action. He began by invoking the 1963 speech by President John F. Kennedy delivered at the same university, in which Kennedy called for a nuclear test ban treaty and a policy of peaceful diplomacy with the Soviet Union.

Kennedy's policy, announced just months after the Cuban missile crisis, proved to be successful, Obama said, because it created “the time and space to win the Cold War without firing a shot at the Soviets.”

The clear implication was that Obama's nuclear deal with Iran would provide the best conditions for eliminating Iran as an obstacle to US imperialist policy in the Middle East and internationally without entailing the risks and costs of a major war. To bolster his argument, Obama linked the present-day opponents of the Iran nuclear agreement with those who advocated the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which Obama characterized as a strategic disaster.

The president touted his supposed anti-war credentials, citing his opposition to the Iraq invasion, which he used to appeal to anti-war and anti-Bush sentiment in his 2008 election campaign. He did not bother to square this pretense with his record in office—continuing the Iraq bloodbath for another two years after coming to power, massively expanding the war in Afghanistan, organizing the war for regime-change that left Libya in a permanent state of chaos,

and orchestrating a catastrophic civil war for regime-change in Syria.

Over the past year, he has launched a new war in Iraq, initiated the bombing of Syria and backed a murderous war by Saudi Arabia in Yemen. Just days before his speech at American University, he backed the carving out of a “buffer zone” in Syria by Turkish forces and sanctioned US air strikes against Syrian government forces in support of US-funded and trained mercenaries operating in the country.

Moreover, he made a point in his speech of reiterating that even with a nuclear agreement, Washington would retain the option of war against Iran. At one point he said: “[I]f 15 or 20 years from now, Iran tries to build a bomb, this deal ensures that the United States will have better tools to detect it, a stronger basis under international law to respond, and the same options available to stop a weapons program as we have today, including—if necessary—military options.”

At another point he declared: “The defense budget of the United States is more than \$600 billion. To repeat, Iran’s is about \$15 billion. Our military remains the ultimate backstop to any security agreement that we make. I have stated that Iran will never be allowed to obtain a nuclear weapon. I have done what is necessary to make sure our military options are real. And I have no doubt that any president who follows me will take the same position.”

He all but boasted: “I’ve ordered military action in seven countries,” adding, “There are times when force is necessary, and if Iran does not abide by this deal, it’s possible that we don’t have an alternative.”

There are sharp divisions within the American ruling class and state and with traditional US allies in the region over the Iran agreement and any attempt to line up the Iranian regime behind US imperialism’s drive for hegemony over the entire Eurasian land mass. They are bound up with the mounting crises and contradictions facing the United States as it seeks to offset its relative economic decline by means of military violence, economic and diplomatic bullying and brazen disregard for international law.

A major factor behind Washington’s turn to some sort of accommodation, at least for the present, with Iran is its desire to focus more political and military resources on its drive to isolate and militarily encircle Russia and China.

But Obama’s attempt to cast this policy shift as a commitment to peaceful diplomacy and adherence to international law is a transparent fraud. The basic premise behind his entire speech was the assumption that the United States has the right to pre-emptively attack Iran or any other country it deems an impediment to its striving for domination of the resources, markets and working masses of the entire planet.

For the president to assert categorically that scuttling the agreement with Iran will bring imminent war can only mean that detailed plans for a massive assault have already been drawn up, behind the backs of the American people, and powerful sections of the ruling elite and the military-intelligence establishment are intent on implementing them.



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