

Washington threatens war with Iran ahead of talks in Oman

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Talks over Iran's nuclear program are set to begin today between the US and Iranian governments in the oil sheikdom of Oman. In recent weeks, US officials have repeatedly threatened that if Iran does not make a deal, Washington will bomb and destroy Iran's nuclear program and its vital oil industry.

Trump announced the talks on Monday during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington to discuss their genocide in Gaza. At a press conference with Netanyahu, Trump said, "We're having direct talks with Iran, and they've started. It'll go on Saturday. We have a very big meeting, and we'll see what can happen." Trump threatened that if Iran does not accept his terms, "there will be bombing ... the likes of which they have never seen before."

Netanyahu advocated a deal to disarm Iran and leave it at the mercy of US and Israeli military action. He called for a nuclear deal "the way it was done in Libya, I think that would be a good thing." Indeed, eight years after Libya signed a nuclear disarmament deal in 2003, after working class uprisings in neighboring Egypt and Tunisia, Washington, London and Paris launched a war on Libya that ended in regime change and Libya's collapse into a still-ongoing civil war.

Yesterday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt reiterated Trump's war threats ahead of the talks in Oman. Leavitt said Trump has "made it very clear to the Iranians, and his national security team will as well, that all options are on the table, and Iran has a choice to make. You can agree to President Trump's demand, or there will be all hell to pay, and that's how the president feels."

Trump has provocatively chosen billionaire real estate speculator Steve Witkoff to lead the US negotiating team. Yesterday, Witkoff told the *Wall Street Journal* that his initial demand would be the

dismantling of Iran's civilian nuclear program, which Iranian officials have declared to be unacceptable.

"I think our position begins with dismantlement of your program," Witkoff summed up his position towards the Iranian government for the *Journal*. "That doesn't mean, by the way, that at the margin we're not going to find other ways to find compromise between the two countries."

Amid explosive popular opposition in Iran and internationally to the US-backed genocide in Gaza, Iranian officials initially declined to negotiate directly with Trump. In February, Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei had said direct talks with Washington were "not smart, wise, or honorable." On Tuesday, a senior Iranian official told Reuters that "The talks will not be direct" but rely on Oman's mediation, while Iran's Nour News Agency called the proposal of talks a "psychological operation aimed at influencing domestic and international public opinion."

Yesterday, however, Iranian Foreign Ministry officials made it clear they were eager for talks with the leaders of the Gaza genocide. Spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei tweeted, "In earnest and with candid vigilance, we are giving diplomacy a genuine chance."

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said, "Without threats and intimidation from the American side, there is a good possibility of reaching an accord."

US war threats against Iran pose an immense danger of military escalation in the Middle East and across the world, as Washington and the European powers try to dominate Eurasia. Trump is threatening the world with trade war and placing draconian tariffs on China, the main buyer of Iranian oil, while the European powers are remilitarizing to escalate the war with Russia in Ukraine and beyond. Under these conditions, not only a

US war with Iran but also a US accord with Iran would put imperialist war with China or Russia on the order of the day.

Trump's call to bomb Iran and protect the Israeli regime are the escalation of longstanding US policies, as US imperialism and its European allies have sought for decades to militarily subjugate the Middle East, at the cost of millions of lives. In 2018, Trump unilaterally canceled a nuclear treaty with Iran signed in 2015 by Washington, Berlin, London, Paris, Moscow and Beijing. He then cut off Iran from all US dollar transactions, trying to isolate Iran from world trade.

Today, threats against Iran are bound up with Israel's genocidal war in Gaza and the imperialist powers' attempt to carry out a bloody neocolonial redivision of the Middle East. After the Biden administration backed the Gaza genocide and toppled Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime after 13 years of war, installing an Al Qaeda-linked regime in Syria last year, Trump has relentlessly bombed the Yemeni Houthi militias for attacking arms shipments to Israel.

The Iranian regime's decision to open talks with Trump under these conditions marks a further, humiliating exposure of the Middle Eastern bourgeoisie's inability to organize any significant opposition to the imperialist-backed genocide of the Palestinian people.

US war threats against Iran have moreover become directly bound up with broader imperialist plans for the domination of Eurasia, amid the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine and the mounting crisis of the US economy and the US dollar. Iran not only signed military alliances with both China in 2017 and Russia this January, but also emerged as a key provider of drones for the Russian war effort against the NATO-backed regime in Ukraine.

Trump's earlier attempt to strangle Iran's economy by cutting it off from the US dollar and the SWIFT financial network ultimately rebounded against Washington. At last year's BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) summit in Kazan, Russia, there was public discussion of plans to de-dollarize trade between major Eurasian powers. This provoked escalating threats and denunciations from Washington.

In January, Trump threatened to impose a 100 percent tariff on any BRICS country that ceased using the dollar to finance its international trade.

In March, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Washington would slow Iran's oil exports to a "trickle" and "collapse its already buckling economy." He added, "We are going to shut down Iran's oil sector and drone manufacturing capabilities."

On Thursday, the Trump administration imposed sanctions on a Chinese oil company, Guangsha Zhoushan Energy Group Co Ltd, which it claims operates facilities that "knowingly engaged with oil from Iran."

This was a barely veiled threat to economically strangle China, which is estimated to import at least 75 percent of Iran's oil exports, trading outside the dollar to avoid US sanctions. Bessent's threat also raises the question of how Washington intends to halt the shipment of Iranian oil to China, which has proceeded for most of a decade now—in particular, whether US and allied warships in the Indian Ocean may begin seizing tankers bound for China with Iranian oil.

As Washington imposes devastating tariffs on China this month, virtually shutting Chinese goods out of the US economy and provoking Beijing to impose large retaliatory tariffs, the potential for such operations to trigger a direct US-China clash is rising by the day.

A craven Iranian neocolonial deal with Washington would not, however, lead to peace. Were Iran to capitulate to Trump's demands, halting its nuclear program, cutting off military aid to Russia, and abandoning trade with China outside the dollar, it would pave the way for broader and bloodier conflicts as Washington pursued its confrontation with China and Russia. The only viable policy to halt genocide and imperialist war is the mobilization of working class opposition in an international, socialist anti-war movement.



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