

# Trump poised to launch criminal war on Iran behind smokescreen of talks

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27 February 2026

Having amassed vast military power in the Middle East, spearheaded by two aircraft carrier strike groups and scores of F-35, F-22 and F-16 warplanes, US imperialism is locked and loaded to unleash a criminal war on Iran in the coming days, if not hours.

Such a war would have catastrophic consequences for the beleaguered people of Iran, and quickly set the entire region ablaze. In off-the-record briefings, Trump administration and Pentagon officials say they are preparing for a months-long bombardment of Iran. This would dwarf the 12-day unprovoked war that the US and Israel waged on Iran last June, which killed more than a thousand Iranians, most of them civilians.

With Trump continuing to amplify his threats of an impending attack, Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi held talks in Geneva Thursday with the designated negotiators of America's would-be dictator president—his business crony, Steve Witkoff, and his son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

The so-called negotiations are a sham. They resemble nothing so much as a mafia shakedown or, to be more precise, the ultimatums that Hitler issued as he rampaged across Europe in the run-up to and initial stages of World War II.

Unless it submits to a series of sweeping demands, Iran—an historically oppressed country that has already been subject to years of punishing economic sanctions, themselves tantamount to war—is threatened with imminent attack by the largest deployment of US imperialist firepower since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

To underscore the point, as the Geneva talks began, the Pentagon ordered the world's largest aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald Ford, to leave Crete, where it has been docked since Monday, to move closer to Israel and Iran. Israeli forces have been on high alert in anticipation of a US strike on Iran for weeks. They are only awaiting Washington's greenlight to join an attack.

With Oman's foreign minister serving as the go-between, Iranian and US negotiators, sitting in separate rooms, exchanged proposals and comments on Thursday. International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mariano Grossi also joined the talks for a time.

After an initial session lasting some four hours, the two sides took a lengthy break, reportedly to consult with their respective governments. Following a second, shorter session, Araghchi said "good progress was made, with the two sides entering "into a serious examination of the elements of an agreement."

In recent interactions with the press, Iranian officials have repeatedly claimed that a "win-win" deal is within reach, if the negotiations are restricted to Iran's nuclear program and sanctions relief.

Tehran has let it be known that as a part of any deal with

Washington it is ready to make sweeping economic concessions to the US, including ceding rights to American companies to develop oil and gas and critical minerals projects. One unnamed official said they constituted a "bonanza" of investment opportunities. It is not known whether Tehran formally presented these proposals at Thursday's talks.

At their conclusion, Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said they would resume next week, first with technical level discussions and later further high-level talks.

Even some western media reports expressed skepticism that this would come to pass, adding that the brevity of the second session and the failure of the US side to say anything about the negotiations was "ominous."

The two sides have repeatedly clashed over what has been said in the three rounds of negotiations held since Feb 6. Iranian officials have claimed that Washington has agreed Iran should be able to retain at least a token civil nuclear program, enriching small amounts of low level uranium for medical purposes, thereby asserting its sovereign right to have a civil nuclear program as a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Witkoff has flatly denied this. He has reasserted Trump's demand that Iran's entire civil nuclear program be dismantled, and Tehran barred from having any civil nuclear program in perpetuity.

US sources have also indicated that even if the two sides do come to an agreement on the nuclear issue, until other US demands are met any "sanctions relief" would be strictly limited to the release of money belonging to Iran currently frozen overseas.

These demands include Iran ceasing support to Hamas, Hezbollah and the other members of its Mideast "Axis of Resistance," and surrendering its intermediate ballistic missile capabilities.

"Iran refuses—refuses—to talk about the ballistic missiles, to us or to anyone and that's a big problem," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio declared Wednesday.

Were Iran's Shia-clergy-led bourgeois nationalist regime to accept Washington's demands, Iran would be rendered effectively defenceless in the face of US or Israeli aggression. Their imposition would constitute de facto imperialist-imposed regime change, regardless of who remained at the helm of the Islamic Republic and its leading institutions.

In his State of the Union address Tuesday evening, Trump spewed a series of lies about Iran, aimed at concocting a *casus belli* for war. These include that Iran has refused to state that its nuclear program is solely for civilian purposes and that it is working to build missiles that "will soon reach" the USA.

All of this turns reality on its head.

Not only has Iran long forsworn nuclear weapons, it was Trump who in 2018 blew up the UN-backed Iran nuclear accord under which Tehran had been compelled to dismantle much of its nuclear program and submit to the most intrusive IAEA inspections regime ever designed.

Shortly thereafter Trump imposed sweeping worldwide economic sanctions on Iran, with the avowed aim of crashing its economy and precipitating regime change. These sanctions were further expanded under the Biden administration, provoking a wrenching economic crisis that has plunged much of the Iranian population into dire poverty.

Moreover, it is US imperialism that is engineering a new nuclear arms race, involving a massive build-up of both tactical and strategic nuclear weapons. Earlier this month, Trump let the last nuclear-arms control treaty with Russia lapse, with the express aim of pursuing a huge increase in America's intermediate range nuclear arsenal to menace China as part of its Air-Sea Battle and Island Chain strategies for war with Beijing.

As for the claim Iran is seeking intercontinental missile capability, even Carl Bildt, the former Swedish Prime Minister and co-chair of the pro-NATO Council of European Foreign Relations, had to concede, "It's beginning to sound like 2003"—in a reference to George W. Bush and Tony Blair's lies concerning Iraq's "weapons of mass destruction."

American imperialism has never reconciled itself to the 1979 Iranian revolution, which overthrew the tyrannical, CIA-installed, monarchical-dictatorship of the Shah. For decades the Pentagon has been planning to wage war on Iran. In 2003 and again in 2007-8, the George W. Bush administration actively considered attacking Iran. Obama repeatedly insisted "all options were on the table" as he used the nuclear issue to bully Iran, and sought to reassert Washington's dominance over the Middle East after the Iraq war debacle and the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

The current war drive against Iran arises directly out of the post-October 2023 US-Israeli drive to impose a "final solution" to the Palestinian question as part of the assertion of unbridled US imperialist hegemony over the Middle East through war, regime change and, in Gaza, outright genocide.

In recent days, major media outlets with close connection to the US military-intelligence apparatus have reported that senior Pentagon officials have cautioned Trump that Iran has significant military capabilities and that any conflict with Iran will be protracted and could result in major US reversals and casualties.

Tehran, for its part, has vowed to strike US military bases and warships across the region and warned that a war will quickly engulf the region. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and the other Gulf States are claiming they will not allow the US to use its bases in their countries and airspace to attack Iran. This is partly in hopes of averting Iranian retaliation, but no less importantly because they fear the reaction among their restive populations to their complicity in an unprovoked and illegal US-led, Israeli-backed assault on Iran.

The warnings from sections of the Pentagon top brass are rooted in their recognition that, in trying to subjugate a country almost three times as populous and four times larger than Iraq, US imperialism risks reaping the whirlwind. But their true purpose may be to prevail on Trump to adhere to the Pentagon's long-developed plans for a war with Iran. These call for a massive and continuing assault, aimed at eliminating as much of Iran's retaliatory capacity, including electricity and other vital public infrastructure from the get-go.

Trump, US media outlets claim, is thinking of ordering a "limited" initial strike on Iran, targeting nuclear and ballistic missile sites or the Islamic Revolutionary Guard command, to try to extort greater concessions from Iran, before committing to an all-out war.

However it starts, a war on Iran will be a war of aggression, the "supreme international crime" as defined at the Nuremberg trials, waged by a criminal regime, that on behalf of America's capitalist oligarchy is intent on imposing unfettered US domination over the world and dictatorship at home.

The entire Democrat Party is complicit in this. They recycle all the White House's lying arguments for a regime change war—from the need to ensure that Iran never has a nuclear weapon to the claim that the Islamic Republic is uniquely oppressive. The Democrats only complaint is that Trump hasn't properly prepared the political terrain for war by "explaining" its aims to the American people.

The *Wall Street Journal* made much the same point in an editorial Wednesday exhorting Trump to attack Iran now. "If (Trump) asks for support in advance from Congress and the public, he will have more allies if the war doesn't go exactly as planned, which it rarely does," it wrote.

The working class in the United States and around the world must mobilize against the impending attack on Iran. It will have untold consequences for the people of Iran, and the world. From the standpoint of the strategists of US imperialism effecting regime change in Iran and establishing domination over the Middle East—the world's most important oil exporting region and the strategic hinge between three continents—is only a stepping stone toward war with China.

Protests and strikes must be organized demanding "Hands off Iran," the withdrawal of all US and other imperialist forces from the Middle East, an end to the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the lifting of all sanctions against Iran. Such action must be animated by the fight to link opposition to imperialist war with the growing struggles of the international working class against the evisceration of its social and democratic rights, and infused with a revolutionary socialist program and perspective to put an end to capitalism—the source of war, dictatorship and oligarchy.



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