

Newsletter Wednesday August 8, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

| Print

| US will not prevent Iran oil exports, Iranian FM warns

Remark comes in response to stated U.S. plan to reduce Iran's oil exports "to zero" • U.S. President Donald Trump warns: Iran must change its destabilizing behavior and reintegrate with the global economy, or continue down a path of economic isolation.

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif | Photo: Reuters

A U.S. plan to reduce Iran's oil exports to zero will not succeed, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was quoted as saying by an Iranian newspaper Wednesday.

U.S. officials have said in recent weeks that they aim to pressure countries to stop buying oil from Iran in a bid to force Tehran to halt its nuclear and missile programs and involvement in regional conflicts in Syria and Iraq.

"If the Americans want to keep this simplistic and impossible idea in their minds they should also know its consequences," Zarif told the Iran newspaper. "They can't think that Iran won't export oil and others will export."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani hinted last month that Iran would block the Strait of Hormuz, a major oil shipping route, if the U.S. attempted to disrupt the country's oil exports.

U.S. President Donald Trump responded by noting that Iran could face serious consequences if it threatened the United States.

"The Americans have assembled a war room against Iran," Zarif said. "We can't get drawn into a confrontation with America by falling into this war room trap and playing on a battlefield."

Meanwhile, Trump's National Security Adviser John Bolton said Tuesday that U.S. sanctions that went into effect at midnight Tuesday, are meant to pressure Tehran's government into retreating from its support for international terrorism, its military activity in the Middle East and its ballistic missile and nuclear-related programs.

The first set of sanctions reimposed by the U.S. Tuesday target financial transactions involving U.S. dollars, Iran's automotive sector, the purchase of commercial airplanes and metals, including gold.

Additional sanctions on Iran's oil sector and central bank are set to be reinstated in early November.

Video: Reuters

The sanctions went back into effect under an executive order Trump signed three months after pulling out of the 2015 international accord limiting Iran's nuclear activities. Trump called the deal, signed by the preceding Obama administration, "horrible."

In a morning tweet, Trump said the reimposition of sanctions means that "anyone doing business with Iran will NOT be doing business with the United States.

"I am asking for WORLD PEACE, nothing less!"

The stiff economic sanctions ratchet up pressure on Iran despite statements of deep dismay from European allies. Trump said the landmark deal left the Iranian government flush with cash to fuel conflict in the Middle East.

Iran accused the U.S. of renegeing on the agreement and of causing recent Iranian economic unrest. European allies said they "deeply regret" the U.S. action.

As the sanctions loomed, Trump said in a statement Monday: "We urge all nations to take such steps to make clear that the Iranian regime faces a choice: either change its threatening, destabilizing behavior and reintegrate with the global economy or continue down a path of economic isolation."

Trump warned that those who don't wind down their economic ties to Iran "risk severe consequences."

A senior administration official, briefing reporters under ground rules requiring anonymity, said the United States was "not particularly concerned" by EU efforts to protect European firms from the sanctions.

Bolton denied any worsening of U.S. relations with Europe, saying the administration has been in "constant communication with them" over the issue.

"We all still share the same objective of making sure that Iran doesn't get deliverable nuclear weapons," he said.

U.S. officials insisted the American government stands with the people of Iran and supports many of their complaints against their government.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said sanctions are an important pillar in U.S. policy toward Iran and will remain in place until the Iranian government radically changes course.

The U.S has long designated Iran as the world's foremost state sponsor of terrorism.