

Maximum Pressure Policy on Iran

Administration Policy:

President Trump issued a [National Security Presidential Memorandum](#) implementing a policy of maximum pressure sanctions on Iran.

The Secretary of the Treasury is responsible for imposing and enforcing sanctions on Iran, reviewing all licenses that provide sanctions relief to Iran or its terrorist proxies, and maintaining countermeasures against Iran at the [Financial Action Task Force](#) (FATF).

The Secretary of State is required to rescind all waivers that grant Iran economic relief and implement sanctions to drive Iran's export of oil to zero. The memorandum also requires the Secretary of State to leverage diplomatic channels to isolate Iran in international organizations, including the denial of freedom of movement to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The memorandum requires the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations to work with allies to complete the [snapback](#) of international sanctions and restrictions on Iran and hold Iran accountable for its breach of the [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty](#).

The memorandum requires the Attorney General (AG) to investigate and prosecute Iranian sponsored financial networks or front groups inside the United States. Additionally, the AG must indict leaders of Iranian backed terrorist organizations which have killed Americans and help American victims of terrorism collect on legal judgments.

Background:

- President Trump's successful maximum pressure campaign on Iran in the first term led to real results including [shrinking the Iranian defense budget by 25%](#) and putting the Iranian economy in shambles.
- President Biden's administration refused to enforce sanctions on Iran, which enabled Iran's oil exports—particularly to China—to surge, with revenues swelling from [\\$16 billion in 2020 to \\$53 billion by 2023](#).
 - These concessions failed to induce Iran to negotiate in [good faith](#).
- Only [\\$4 billion](#) in accessible foreign exchange reserves remained in Iran's possession at the end of 2020, down from over \$120 billion it held prior to President Trump's decision to exit the Iran deal.
 - Under the Biden administration, Iran's currency reserves [grew](#) to over \$21 billion at the end of 2023. The Energy Information Agency [reported](#) that Iran sold \$144 billion in the first three years of the Biden administration, \$100 billion more than what Tehran exported in the last two years of the Trump administration when the oil sanctions were in effect.
- On February 25th, the State Department and Treasury Department [took](#) the first actions pursuant to President Trump's memorandum.
 - The Secretary of State [designated](#) 16 entities and vessels for their involvement in Iran's petroleum and petrochemical industry.
 - The Department of State and the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) concurrently sanctioned a combined total of 22 persons and identified 13 vessels as blocked property, across multiple jurisdictions, for their involvement in Iran's oil industry.
- President Obama's failed Iran nuclear agreement gave Iran [over \\$150 billion](#) in sanctions relief while permitting Iran to legally acquire a nuclear weapon within a decade.