

# **‘It would be foolish for the United States to unilaterally withdraw or otherwise violate the JCOPA’**

## **Hamid Bayati**

**IRTT:** Daryl G. Kimball the Executive Director at Arms Control Association believes that “it would be foolish for the United States to unilaterally withdraw or otherwise violate the JCOPA without an alternative”.

Kimball said in an interview with Iranian media that “Trump needs to learn how to take yes for an answer from European allies who have invested considerable efforts to try to address his concerns about the JCPOA and Trump needs to work with our European allies to uphold the JCPOA and not to unravel it.

Here is the full text of interview with Mr. Kimball:

**As you know, in a statement on January 12, U.S. President Donald Trump set a May 12 deadline for the Europeans to agree to an overhaul of the nuclear agreement or he would unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from it, so how do you predict the next situation about JCPOA?**

In January, President Trump called for “fixes” to the JCPOA, but the European partners to the JCPOA have made it abundantly clear they will not seek to renegotiate certain nuclear-related requirements already agreed to under the existing agreement.

In response, diplomats from the E3 governments (UK, France, Germany) and the Trump administration are engaged in discussions about how they might agree to work together in ways to prevent the spread of Iranian ballistic missiles, to address their common concerns about Iran's support for militias and rebel fighters in the region, and to explore approaches regarding how to ensure that Iran does not reconstitute its capability to produce material for nuclear weapons and pursue nuclear weapons after some of the key JCPOA limits expire. This arrangement would not violate the JCPOA and would allow for it to continue forward. As EU High Representative Mogherini said April 16, the EU has a "strong commitment to continue the full implementation of the agreement in all its parts" and will discuss separately "other issues that fall beyond the field of competence of the agreement."

We believe that the E3 and the Trump administration can reach such an agreement, but it is not clear whether this will convince Trump to respect U.S. obligations to continue to waive the nuclear-related sanctions on Iran as required by the JCPOA. In order to put more pressure on the E3, Trump may decide before or on May 12 not to extend the waivers but not to immediately reimpose the nuclear-related sanctions. This would constitute a violation of the JCPOA and would likely trigger the Europeans to seek measures to ensure their businesses and financial institutions are protected from secondary U.S. sanctions. How Trump responds in this situation is not clear to me and probably not even to his closest advisors.

**As trump threatens to scrap JCPOA, Saudi Arabia wants to become a nuclear power and in past we saw different reports that Saudis bought nuclear warheads so is it possible U.S. scrapped Iran's nuclear agreement and give Tehran green light to return to its past activity?**

It is highly doubtful that the Saudis would be able to “buy” nuclear warheads and even if they did, they do not have a nuclear and military infrastructure to deploy them. Rather, what is worrisome is that the leaders of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are refusing to rule out the pursuit of its own indigenous uranium enrichment program as it negotiates with the United States on a civil nuclear cooperation agreement. Though Saudi Arabia says that it is seeking nuclear power for peaceful purposes to diversify its sources of energy, recent statements by the Saudi leadership have cast doubt on the kingdom’s commitment to its obligations under the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) not to acquire nuclear weapons. In an interview with CBS News March 15 Crown Prince bin Salman warned: “Without a doubt, if Iran developed a nuclear bomb, we will follow suit as soon as possible.”

We are urging the Trump administration to insist on the highest nonproliferation safeguards in the proposed U.S.-Saudi agreement for civil nuclear cooperation, including a Saudi commitment not to engage in uranium enrichment or spent fuel reprocessing activities and to ratify the IAEA Additional Protocol. Saudi Arabia does not need its own enrichment capability to pursue nuclear energy production and its possession of such technologies could allow it to produce material for nuclear weapons.

Bipartisan opposition in Congress to an agreement that does not block Saudi uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing appears to be mounting. Lawmakers should closely scrutinize any agreement with Saudi Arabia to ensure that it contains adequate safeguards. And if it does not, Congress should use its authority to put conditions on the agreement to ensure it does not leave the door open to further proliferation of nuclear fuel-making technologies in the Middle East.

### **If the U.S. president shoots down the Nuclear Deal, how can Washington persuade N.Korea to give up its nuclear activities?**

If the Trump administration takes steps that begin to unravel the JCPOA, especially before President Trump is due to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in late-May, it will likely undermine his attempts to reach a deal with Kim on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

### **What are the internal consequence of Trump decision to scrap JCPOA?**

Many of President Trump's own Republican party leaders, as well as virtually all Democratic leaders, understand that it would be foolish for the United States to unilaterally withdraw or otherwise violate the JCOPA without an alternative, non-military plan, especially as Iran continues to meet its nuclear-related obligations under the terms of the agreement. If he withdraws and provokes another crisis in the region, there will be some political cost to his presidency at home. If Trump violates the JCPOA, it will damage his reputation in the eyes of the international community.

Trump needs to learn how to take yes for an answer from European allies who have invested considerable efforts to try to address his concerns about the JCPOA and Trump needs to work with our European allies to uphold the JCPOA and not to unravel it.

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