

Analysis: Iran Still Wants More

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Negotiation status: PAUSED (exchanging responses)

- In the 3rd exchange of indirect proposals between Iran and the United States since the EU sent what it called the “final” text to Iran, Tehran has sent [another response](#), which U.S. negotiators are now studying.
 - » Initial comments from the Biden administration were skeptical.
 - One U.S. official [said](#), “We are studying Iran’s response but the bottom line is that it is **not at all encouraging**,” and added, “Based on their answer **we appear to be moving backwards**.”
 - A U.S. State Department official [said](#) the Iranian response “is **not constructive**.”
 - » European diplomats [echoed](#) the negative assessment.
 - One official said it was “**negative and not reasonable**.”
 - Another reportedly added that the reply did “**not look good at all**.”
 - » EU foreign policy chief and lead negotiator in the talks Josep Borrell expressed rare pessimism over Iran’s response, [saying](#) on September 5 that the deal is “**in danger**.”
- However, despite Iran’s disappointing response and repeated claims that time is running out for negotiations, the Biden administration indicated it wants to keep talking.
 - » National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson [said](#) on September 2, “This is a negotiation, with regular back and forth... Some gaps have closed in recent weeks but others remain.”

“Final” Iran Deal Still Open for Debate

- AUG. 8** ● **EU submits “final” text to Iran and U.S.**
 - Aug. 15 deadline for “yes or no” from Iran
 - “It is a package proposal... You cannot agree with page 20 and disagree with page 50.”
 - EU Foreign policy chief Josep Borrell

- AUG. 15** ● **Iran ignores EU ultimatum, provides new demands**

Key Demands:

 1. Sanctions relief [before](#) congressional review
 2. U.S. guarantees that:
 - a. Iran can rapidly advance its nuclear program if U.S withdraws
 - b. Iran will reap the benefits of a nuclear deal regardless of a U.S. withdrawal.
 - c. U.S. provides insurance to companies considering investment in Iran
 3. Iran mentions, but doesn’t list as demand, closing the IAEA investigation

- AUG. 16** ● **“What could be negotiated... has been negotiated”**
 - U.S. State Department Spokesman [Ned Price](#)

- AUG. 24** ● **U.S. responds to Iran**
 1. [Yes](#) to sanctions relief before congressional review
 2. No to guarantees
 3. No to closing IAEA investigation

- AUG. 31** ● **“We have an agreement... I’m hoping in the coming days... we can close the deal”**
 - E.U. foreign policy chief [Josep Borrell](#)

- SEPT. 1** ● **Iran responds with additional demands**

Demands:

 1. Additional sanctions relief
 2. Guarantees
 3. Iran demands in-text assurance that the IAEA investigation will be closed, and [more](#)

- SEPT. 2** ● **U.S. doesn’t immediately accept demands; commits to more negotiations**

“This is a negotiation, with a regular back and forth. Some gaps have closed in recent weeks but others remain”

 - White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson

Is an agreement imminent?

- A **deal seems further away** than just a week ago; both [U.S.](#) and [Iranian](#) sources are now suggesting an agreement is unlikely to be made until after U.S. midterm elections in November.
 - » Borrell suggested on September 5 that Iran and the United States are further from an agreement than they were just days ago, [saying](#), “I am sorry to say that **I am less confident today** than [48] hours ago about the convergence of the negotiation process and the prospect of closing the deal.”
- *Axios* reported that a White House National Security Council spokesperson [said](#) on September 2, “Iran's response did not put us in a position to close a deal, as we will not close a deal unless Iran meets the terms that we have set forth. We are not there yet.”
 - » Officials have said [repeatedly](#) since last year that time is running out to reach an agreement.
- After the previous U.S. proposal, a 10th round of negotiations in Vienna was [expected](#) to occur in the near future. That, too, appears less imminent now.

Iran’s Key Demands

- Iran has had several long-standing demands, some, but not all of which, were part of its August 15 response to the EU proposal:
 1. sanctions relief on the IRGC;
 2. the closure of an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) investigation into evidence of nuclear activity at undeclared Iranian facilities;
 3. guarantees ensuring the longevity of a deal, including:
 - a. That something be added to the deal to impose such a “heavy price” on the United States for withdrawing—likely in terms of how quickly Iran would restart its nuclear program—that it would be deterred from doing so;
 - b. Guarantees that, if the United States withdraws, Western companies doing business in Iran would be allowed to continue that business.
 4. that they receive immediate sanctions relief upon an agreement being made, before it gets reviewed by U.S. congress.

What We Know Now About the U.S. Counterproposal from August 24

- The American August 24 response [reportedly](#) **rejected Iran’s demand to close the IAEA investigation**.
 - » That the United States and the EU are willing to enter the agreement with Iran without the IAEA first receiving those answers is concerning enough.
 - Iran should have provided the IAEA with the required information already, and there should be no nuclear deal until they do.
 - » Still, Iran has signaled a willingness to agree to, but not enter into, a deal before the probe is ended.
 - Iran could agree to a deal, receive [mass sanctions relief](#) immediately, before the deal goes into effect, and then refuse to go through with the agreement if the investigation is still open.
 - The Biden administration is hoping that Tehran wouldn’t back out because the majority of the sanctions relief wouldn’t go into effect until after implementation day.
- A U.S. official also [told Axios](#) that the Biden administration “made it clear to the Iranians that **it can’t bind the hands of future administrations**” and give Iran guarantees about the future of the deal.
- A leaked Iranian report indicated that the deal would lift over 170 sanctions imposed on Iran by executive order before the Biden administration even submits the deal to Congress. Read this recent JINSA [National Security Brief](#) for more on what those sanctions are and how Congress can retain its oversight prerogatives.
- Borrell, who [previously](#) called Iran’s initial response “reasonable”, [called](#) the American response “**a very reasonable counterproposal**” on August 25.
 - » A senior Iranian lawmaker [rejected](#) that comment, saying on September 1, “With the U.S. response, **hopes for an agreement are fading away.**”

What are the Iranian Demands Now?

- Iranian state-run media [said](#) that Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is insisting on **four conditions**: “removing U.S. sanctions, verification, reassuring guarantees and shelving IAEA demands on safeguards.”
- Although Iran didn’t specifically raise the IAEA investigation as a concern in their initial response on August 15, they “[did](#) add safeguards probe closure back into its formal concerns with the deal response it sent” on September 1.
 - » One European official [expressed](#) frustration with Iran for re-inserting the IAEA investigation into its demands, saying, “**The Iranian response was totally unreasonable.** It reopens the EU coordinator’s text on nuclear safeguards, which was at the outer limits of our flexibility already - and which the Iranians implicitly accepted in their august 15 response. The Iranian response can only be read as they do not want to close this deal - when we were so close, for the first time in 18 months.”

- The *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) new technical details about the deal, including what will be done with Iran’s centrifuges and when Iran will turn back on the cameras monitoring its nuclear facilities and allow the IAEA to review the last 18 months of footage.
 - » All of Iran’s centrifuges except IR-9 will be stored and kept whole instead of being dismantled, significantly decreasing Iran’s nuclear breakout time under the deal.
 - » The IAEA “will only have 60 days (confirmation day to reimplementation day) to examine 18+ months of camera footage and monitoring data from Iran that they didn't receive since Feb 2021.”

Congressional Opposition Continues to Mount

- The number of House Democrats who have voiced concern over a nuclear deal jumped from 20 to [36](#), as a total of 50 House members signed onto a [letter](#) led by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) requesting that the Biden administration “provide Congress with the full text of any proposal to rejoin the Iran nuclear agreement... including any side agreements, and consult with Congress prior to reentering that agreement.”
- Several House Republicans, led by Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY), sent a [letter](#) to the IAEA, insisting that the probe Iran wants prematurely closed continue until the agency receives sufficient answers.

Additional Comments and Reports

- According to *Reuters*, Iran has [begun](#) enriching uranium with additional IR-6 centrifuges at its underground Natanz nuclear facility.
- Over 5,000 Israeli defense officers signed on to a letter [urging](#) President Biden “not to sign a rekindled nuclear deal with Iran, arguing that the deal currently being negotiated gives Iran a clear path to nuclear weapons.”