

Quarantine Iran's Oil to Collapse Regime

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Despite President Trump's threats, Iranian leaders have intensified their imprisonment and killing of anti-regime protesters. To ratchet up the pressure on the regime and fulfill his promise to "[rescue](#)" the Iranian people, Trump should impose a naval quarantine, as he is doing with [Venezuela](#), to cut off the regime's oil exports—its main source of revenue—and declare that America seeks the collapse and end of the current autocratic regime in Tehran.

Unlike his predecessors, President Trump has admirably sided with Iranian protesters, threatening on Thursday "[hell](#)" if the Tehran regime kills any. As of this writing, while reports are sketchy, the Tehran regime has [arrested thousands](#) and [killed hundreds](#). The hell the Islamic Republic should reap, in our view, should be its collapse.

The fall of the Islamic Republic would be a phenomenal strategic boon to the United States. It could solve conclusively the Iranian nuclear threat, remove a key pillar of the anti-American alliance, and deliver a severe blow to Islamic extremists. The regime's fall could contribute to peace in the Middle East and enable the reduction of U.S. forces in that theater, and could unleash the great potential of Iran for trade and oil and natural gas exports, reducing inflationary pressures on the American consumer.

The regime has never been weaker. Not only was it humiliated by Israel and the United States in the 12-Day War, Israel has also severely degraded all of Iran's proxies except the Houthis. The regime rules over a country with one of the [largest natural gas reserves](#) in the world yet through expenditures on terror proxies and its nuclear program, corruption, mismanagement, it can't provide adequate [heating in winter](#) and [air conditioning in the blistering summer](#), and recently contemplated depopulating its capital for [lack of water](#). Inflation cripples its economy.

There have been welcome ideas put forth of ways to help the protesters communicate and organize. But America can do more. On Saturday, President Trump posted, "[The USA stands ready to help!!!](#)" While he is reportedly considering [targeted military air strikes](#), he should at least intensify economic pressure on the regime to facilitate the Iranian people bringing down the regime themselves.

To squeeze the regime economically, Trump should borrow from his effective Venezuelan playbook by instituting a naval quarantine to stop Iranian oil exports. At the end of Trump's first term, Iranian oil exports declined to under [500,000 barrels per day](#), putting great pressure on the regime's finances. President Biden didn't remove Trump's sanctions but didn't enforce them, and Iranian oil exports grew to over [1.5 million barrels per day](#). For reasons having to do with the administration's China policy, and with the challenges of enforcement, Iranian oil exports now

surpass [2 million barrels per day](#), most of which goes to [China](#), providing essential funding for Tehran and fueling an American adversary.

A naval quarantine could stop Iranian oil exports at the source. Positioning U.S. naval assets outside the narrow Straits of Hormuz, Trump could strangle the regime's financial lifeline. It could immediately convince Iranian leaders that their time is up and lead many to flee or switch sides. Or it could simply slowly strangulate the regime. In either case, it would certainly reassure the Iranian people of American support and embolden even more Iranians to rise up against the vile regime.

Of course, there would be risks. The regime might try to hit back against U.S. forces, especially with its potent missile and drone arsenal. Trump would have to make clear such action would prompt a severe American military response against Iranian leaders. Israel would certainly offer its remarkable capabilities to help neutralize any Iranian threats.

Another risk could be time. If the regime doesn't collapse soon, the United States would have to be prepared to maintain the quarantine for an extended period, tying up key military assets. A third risk would be triggering a spike in oil prices, but that risk is lower given the weak oil market, and likely support from the Saudis to fill the gap and earn the extra revenue.

A quarantine would certainly irritate China, which buys about [15 percent](#) of its imported oil from Iran at a discounted price. But even the Asia-only 'restrainers' in the Trump administration should appreciate that defying China and stopping its illegal purchases of oil would send an important signal to Beijing of American strength and fearlessness.

One can't predict if and when the Tehran regime will collapse, and it will have to be brought about by the Iranian people. America can help, and Trump can fulfil his promise to rescue the Iranian people, by upping the economic pressure with a quarantine of its oil exports. The moment to act is now.