



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on May 27, 2022

Obama Officials Kept Secret Back Channel With Iran to Undermine Trump

Top officials from the Obama administration met in secret with Iran in 2018 in an effort to undercut the Trump administration's attempt to isolate that country's regime, internal State Department documents [reveal](#).

While the Trump White House moved to amp up pressure on Iran in 2018, a group of former U.S. ambassadors took part in an "off-the-record" meeting with former Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif at his New York City residence.

The State Department [memo](#) that revealed this secret meeting was made public due to a lawsuit brought to force the release of the information. The meeting in question took place around the time John Kerry was reported to be working behind-the-scenes with Iranian officials to salvage the 2015 nuclear accord.



AP Images
John Kerry

Marked unclassified, the internal memo describes how these former ambassadors engaged in shadow diplomacy with Iran's top envoy on subjects such as "nuclear weapons, potential prisoner swaps, [the] Afghanistan withdrawal, and negotiations with the Taliban," according to the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a legal advocacy group that sued the State Department to obtain the internal memo.

The released document serves as confirmation that Obama-era officials created a back channel to maintain negotiations with Iran even as then-President Trump and his administration worked to isolate the regime.

In exclusive remarks to the Washington Free Beacon, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was not aware of the meetings detailed in the memo.

"This memo reflects even more than we already knew about former State Department officials continuing on as if they were still in office," said Pompeo, who is now senior counsel for global affairs at the ACLJ. "Trying, at every turn, to work with the foreign minister for a terrorist regime, Iran, to undermine the very sanctions put in place by America. It's worse than not knowing when to get off stage. Actively seeking to protect the terrible deal they struck, these former officials — two years after Obama left office — were signaling that Iran should stand firm against America."

Pompeo said it is startling to know that members of a previous administration were trying to undermine the policies of a sitting president, calling the disclosure "bad stuff, dangerous stuff, un-American stuff." These former officials, he said, "should be ashamed of themselves. Working against their own nation's policies alongside such a brutal regime."



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As the Free Beacon notes:

The seven-page memo was assembled during the meeting with Zarif, which came just days after reports emerged that Kerry was seeking to salvage the Iran nuclear agreement after Trump nixed it earlier that year. The document was produced after the ACLJ sued the State Department for records about any secret meetings between Zarif, Kerry, current U.S. Iran-Envoy Robert Malley, and former Obama secretary of energy Ernest Moniz.

During the meeting, Zarif claimed that Trump's policies have fomented anti-U.S. fervor in Iran and pointed to the popularity of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) leader Qassem Soleimani, who was assassinated by Trump two years later in a drone strike.

"I was as popular as Soleimani, but now I am at 47 percent and his is up," Zarif said, according to the memo. "He is closer to 80 percent. People of Iran once preferred engagement, now opted for resistance as the only reality. That is what the polls are telling us now and it is the reality of the region."

Zarif also declared that his government would never stop its missile program or cease enriching uranium — the primary component in a nuclear weapon and one of the conditions Trump put on a potential new deal with Iran that never came to fruition.

"The U.S. says no peace deal and the U.S. will reimpose sanctions, but the condition is zero missiles, zero nuclear enrichment. This is what [John] Bolton wants," Zarif said, referring to Trump's national security adviser. "I know Bolton and negotiated with him years ago. His views are so radical, that we could not reach an agreement. Absolute impossibility to reach an agreement with John Bolton unless you ask him to sit down and read at dictation speed what he wants and then you sign it. He is incapable of compromise."

ACLJ also received several internal State Department emails showing that after Kerry left office, he used State Department staffers to communicate with Zarif.

Ben Sisney, senior litigation counsel for ACLJ, said the organization's legal efforts prove that "there were even more secret meetings happening behind the Trump administration's back than had been previously reported."



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