



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on March 25, 2026

Trump Hunts for Iran Off-ramp While Tehran Shakes Its Fist

The United States has reportedly delivered a peace proposal to Iran and [threatened](#) more attacks if the Iranians don't agree to a deal.

A high-ranking diplomatic source told [Al Jazeera](#) that the Iranians received and rejected the plan on the basis that it's "extremely maximalist and unreasonable." Also, on Wednesday, an Iranian military spokesperson issued a combative message in which he calls Donald Trump "the foolish president of America" and claims the U.S. government is concealing from the American people the true number of U.S. casualties.



AP Images

President Trump said on Tuesday that the two countries were in the middle of negotiations. He first announced that talks were happening on Monday, three days after he completely dismissed the idea of ceasefire discussions, saying there was no one in Iran to talk to because all their leaders had been killed.

The Iranians have wavered between outright denials that negotiations were happening to acknowledgement that mediators were trying to facilitate them. Meanwhile, Arab mediators are [telling](#) Western media that "Iran is being less strident in private discussions to end the war than it is in public." Nevertheless, "the odds of success remain low, with Iran and the U.S. staking out maximalist demands that are unacceptable to the other side," per the mediators.

[According](#) to reports, the peace proposal is similar to the one the United States presented before starting the war on February 28. The plan

calls on Iran to dismantle its three main nuclear sites and end any enrichment on Iranian soil, suspend its ballistic-missile work, curb support for proxies and fully reopen the Strait of Hormuz. In return, Iran would have nuclear-related sanctions lifted ... and the U.S. would assist — while monitoring — the country's civilian nuclear program."

Rejection

Iranians have consistently rejected deals that will not allow them to enrich uranium on their own soil. They have maintained that the reason they wanted to keep their nuclear program was for civilian energy production, not to build nuclear weapons. A U.S. threat assessment from last year concluded that Iran was not building nuclear weapons. But it also corroborated the findings of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which said that Iran had enriched uranium to levels far above anything necessary for civilian purposes.

Joe Kent, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center whose resignation last week ignited a whirlwind of attacks and smears from the president and the neoconservative media ecosystem,



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told Tucker Carlson the reason the Iranians enriched to such high levels was because they want a nuclear program for civilian energy but one that's also capable of scaling in case the country needed to defend itself. Now that two of the most powerful militaries in the world have attacked them, the Iranians likely see the need for nuclear weapons as more dire than before.

Interestingly, North Korea's dictator, Kim Jong Un, recently said this war "proves his country made the right decision to keep its nuclear weapons," [according](#) to reports. In fact, some suggest this war will lead more countries to this conclusion. Since World War II, the United States has been engaged in more interventionist military campaigns than any other country. Yet it has never directly attacked a nuclear-armed country. The closest is its various proxy wars against Russia.

No Surrender

Ebrahim Zolfaqari, spokesperson for the unified command of Iran's armed forces, Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, issued a blistering, fist-shaking message to the United States on Wednesday. The Associated Press published part of it. Zolfaqari [said](#):

The strategic power you used to talk about has turned into a strategic failure. The one claiming to be a global superpower would have already gotten out of this mess if it could. Don't dress up your defeat as an agreement. Your era of empty promises has come to an end.... Have your internal conflicts reached the point where you are negotiating with yourselves?... We state this clearly: Until it is our will, nothing will go back to the way it is. That will only come about when the Iranian nation is completely wiped from your corrupt minds.... Our first and last word has been the same from Day 1 and it will stay that way: Someone like us will never come to terms with someone like you. Not now, not ever.

In other parts of his message, Zolfaqari takes personal shots at Trump, calling him "foolish." He also accuses the U.S. government of concealing the true number of American casualties as part of an effort to avoid "the fierce resistance of your own people."

Zolfaqari also invoked rhetoric indicating that he perceives this as a religious war. [Zolfaqari](#) again:

Know that God's hand is above all hands. You have humiliated both your officers, your equipment, and your advanced weapons in this war you started. And the false power that you proclaimed has discredited itself in the minds of the world. And this [is] the greatest victory for the Islamic Republic of Iran and our heroic nation. It is the frontline of Muslims around the world against your aggression and glory.

Attacks Continue

Meanwhile, the war rages. On Tuesday, Iran [launched](#) 13 salvos at Bnei Brak in Israel after the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly struck an Iranian explosives production facility around Isfahan. The Iranians have been hitting Israel with missiles containing cluster warheads, which are far more difficult to neutralize than single-warhead ballistic missiles. Israeli media reported on Wednesday that cluster bomblets hit Petah Tikva, Givat Shmuel, and Rosh Haayin. Since the war began, the Iranians also fired into a number of neighboring countries, killing civilians, inflicting infrastructure damage, and disrupting tourism, a major source of income for some of the countries in the region.



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As this is happening, the United States is sending thousands more troops to the region. On Tuesday, news broke that 3,000 members of the 82nd Airborne were deployed to the Middle East. The idea of putting boots on the ground is certain to trigger a new wave of anger among Americans who were against this war from the very beginning.

Before this war began, Arab allies warned the White House that a conflict with Iran would spill over into the rest of the region. Trump also knew the Iranians would close the Strait of Hormuz, since they said they would. The Institute for the Study of War [says](#) that Iran has mined the strait.

Economic Impact

While the United States and Israel have, by all accounts, inflicted great damage to Iran's military capability, Tehran has proven resilient and capable of inflicting its own kind of damage. Iran's ability to replace dead leaders with new ones has created the impression that a long war would essentially put America and Israel in a game of whack-a-mole. Iran has also leveraged its ability to control the Strait of Hormuz for maximal damage to the global economy and Trump's political status. Gas prices have skyrocketed in the United States, with the price of other goods expected to soon follow, since the cost of energy is a major factor on virtually everything Americans buy. The administration is feeling the pressure. It has lifted oil sanctions on certain countries and plans to expand sales of higher-ethanol E15 gasoline this summer to boost supply.

The war is also prompting red alerts from American farmers and agricultural groups, who are warning of fertilizer price increases and threatening of reduced availability just as spring planting season begins.

End the War

All this fallout is almost assuredly part of the reason Trump wants to end the war. And, based on statements he made Friday, he's willing to leave Iran without effecting regime change, the goal he articulated in his February 28 message announcing the launch of the war. The new goals, as [outlined](#) by the AP include "completely degrading Iranian Missile Capability"; "destroying Iran's defense industrial base"; "eliminating their Navy and Air Force"; "never allowing Iran to get even close to nuclear capability"; and "protecting, at the highest level, our Middle Eastern Allies," which include Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Kuwait.

Trump reasoned that because "the leaders are all very different than the ones that we started off with that created all those problems," regime change has been technically accomplished. Obviously, that's wrong. The IRGC is still intact and, reportedly, exercising more decision-making authority than before. Also, the new supreme leader is a younger and more radical version of the old. And, as the words of Zolfaqari clearly illustrated, the current version of the regime is just as antagonistic to the United States — and Israel — as the former, if not more so. Either way, Trump is right to look for an off-ramp. This has all the makings of another Middle Eastern quagmire.



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