

Iran doubts Obama's ability to deliver a deal but reaffirms commitment to getting sanctions lifted

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Outlook

The Iranian regime expressed doubts that President Obama can deliver on any deal he commits to, but remains committed to negotiations narrowly restricted to the nuclear program and lifting of sanctions. The regime continued efforts to ensure its stability in advance of possible public discontent should sanctions remain in place. The Supreme Leader ordered the continuation of a prominent anti-corruption campaign, likely aimed at mitigating eroding public confidence in the government. Unlike the current Chinese anti-corruption campaign, Iran's has named no individuals and is unlikely to produce tangible results. Iran will use the CIA torture report as leverage against further US and UN efforts to address human rights violations, potentially defanging American reactions should the regime find it necessary to crack down on future opposition. Tehran will also continue to lay the groundwork for pushing the US military out of Iraq after the Islamic State crisis.

Khamenei Foreign Policy Advisor Ali Akbar Velayati argues President Obama is not empowered to make a nuclear deal.

Velayati [said](#) the United States extended the nuclear negotiations in November because Obama does not have support in making decisions, referring to Congressional opposition to a deal. Tehran's doubts about whether Obama can deliver anything he promises raise questions about why the Supreme Leader is still willing to negotiate. President Rouhani [expressed](#) his

determination to get sanctions lifted, alluding to a willingness to confront those in Iran who might be opposed.

Supreme Leader is trying to right the ship of the Iranian state, at least on the surface.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [ordered](#) the government last week to make "strong and practical decisions to defy corruption," continuing an effort begun after President Hassan Rouhani's election last year. Intelligence Minister Hojjat al-Islam Mahmoud Alavi therefore [announced the arrest of 20 former government officials](#) for fraud and the [return of 90% of the 12 trillion tomans \(\\$4.5 billion USD\) embezzled](#) from the Treasury over the past few years. The regime's commitment to the campaign is doubtful— no officials have been named and no trials have been held.

Iran exploits the CIA torture report.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry [condemned the US Senate's report](#) on the use of Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, and a member of Iran's parliament [called for a UN investigation](#), stating the CIA's interrogation program was a "finishing blow" to American efforts to promote human rights.

Iran's allies in Baghdad hint at effort to hinder a more permanent US military presence in Iraq.

Following Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's [denial](#) that the United States received a new immunity deal for troops operating in Iraq, Iraqi

Foreign Minister and close Iranian ally Ibrahim Jafari [asserted US forces would not be provided judicial immunity](#) in the fight against the Islamic State. These comments followed continued [Iranian mocking](#) of the US campaign against ISIS.

Iran embraces Yemen as part of its larger Islamic resistance against the West and its allies.

IRGC Deputy Commander Brigadier General Hossein Salami, [compared Ansar Allah](#), the political party associated with the Houthi rebel movement that took over the Yemeni capital of Sana'a in September, with Lebanese Hezbollah as a major force in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary activities. Foreign Policy Advisor Velayati also [stated](#) Iran has major influence "from Lebanon to Yemen." Ansar Allah and Houthi leaders have neither confirmed nor denied Iran's backing.

Iranian drones on the U.S.-Mexican border?

[Unconfirmed reports](#) indicate Mexico expressed interest in purchasing Iranian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to support counter-drug trafficking during [an official Iranian visit earlier in the month](#). Such a deal would be [unlikely](#), but highlights Iran's interest in expanding its influence in Mexico and the Western Hemisphere.

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