

A U.S. Commitment to Real Diplomacy Is the Surest Way to Prevent an Iranian Nuclear Weapon

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The U.S. attack on three Iranian nuclear facilities over the weekend was a dangerous military action, derailing ongoing negotiations to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon while bringing the US and Iran to the brink of an all-out war.

Just a few days earlier, President Trump stated that reaching a political agreement with Iran was a priority, and set a two-week window to continue diplomatic talks. As national security and foreign policy professionals, we call on the Trump Administration to redouble efforts to secure the nascent ceasefire deal between Israel and Iran and commit to a serious diplomatic process to ensure that Iran never acquires a nuclear weapon. Diplomacy is the most viable path to prevent Iran from developing these weapons in the long run.

Prior to the strikes on Saturday, the U.S. intelligence community had assessed that Iran had not made a decision to build a nuclear bomb, and was several months away, if not longer, from being able to assemble a crude device. Despite this assessment, President Trump launched a military operation on three key nuclear sites in Iran that were under International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards. These strikes dramatically reduced the IAEA's visibility into Iran's nuclear activities and were carried out while talks between European and Iranian diplomats were underway, risking the possibility of Tehran's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Iran's retaliatory strikes on the U.S. military's Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar on Monday appear to have been calibrated and messaged in advance, indicating a desire to contain tensions and head off a wider confrontation. **Now is the time for the U.S. to pursue a return to talks with Iran with realistic expectations to secure a strong nuclear agreement.** A top priority should be a swift return of IAEA inspectors to key facilities in Iran.

Recent [polling shows](#) that there is strong support among Americans for U.S. leadership to achieve a diplomatic solution to address Iran's nuclear activities. American service members should not be asked to fight in another unnecessary war in the Middle East, nor should the American people be asked to pay for it.

President Trump has spoken of the need to curb the threat of nuclear weapons. We, the undersigned individuals, urge the President, with the full support of the U.S. Congress, to be the historic leader that secures an effective, verifiable negotiated agreement that prevents an Iranian nuclear weapon.

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Alexandra Bell, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Affairs, Bureau of Arms Control, Deterrence, and Stability, U.S. Department of State

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Stephen Heintz, President, Rockefeller Brothers Fund

Frank N. von Hippel, Professor of Public and International Affairs emeritus, Princeton University

Ambassador Bonnie Jenkins, Former Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security

Laura Kennedy, Former U.S. Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament; Former U.S. Chargé at U.S. Mission to International Organizations; Arms Control Association Board

Daryl G. Kimball, Executive Director, Arms Control Association

George A. Lopez, Professor emeritus, Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame

Jessica T. Mathews, Former Director of the Office of Global Issues of the National Security Council

Stephen D. Mull, Former Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State

Tom Pickering, Former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and Ambassador to the United Nations, Israel, Russia, India, El Salvador, Nigeria, and Jordan

Paul R. Pillar, Former National Intelligence Officer for the Near East and South Asia, Georgetown University

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[The Iran Project](#) is a nonpartisan network of leaders from across American political, diplomatic, military, and scholarly communities who support principled diplomacy to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon. For more than two decades, IP has served as a forum for policy analysis and dialogue aimed at advancing negotiated solutions over military escalation.

[Ploughshares](#) seeks to reduce and eventually eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons. As the largest U.S. organization singularly focused on reducing this danger, Ploughshares does critical work to drive collaborative action within the nuclear field and provide funding to experts and organizations focused on mitigating the threat.