
Pompeo threatens Iran with more 'sanctions and isolation' after nuclear expansion

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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has warned that Iran faces “further isolation and sanctions” as Tehran increases its uranium enrichment beyond the limit set by the 2015 nuclear deal.

“Iran’s latest expansion of its nuclear program will lead to further isolation and sanctions,” Pompeo tweeted on Sunday. “Nations should restore the longstanding standard of no enrichment for Iran’s nuclear program. Iran’s regime, armed with nuclear weapons, would pose an even greater danger to the world.”

Speaking to reporters at an impromptu interview in New Jersey later in the afternoon, President Donald Trump added that “Iran better be careful” after breaching the nuclear cap.

As of Sunday, Iran is set to start enriching uranium above the agreed maximum purification level of 3.67 percent set by the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), a deal that the US unilaterally withdrew from last year.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said earlier on Sunday that this step is intended as a “remedial” measure intended to force the European parties to the deal to fulfil their commitments. Zarif also added that the increase is permitted by the deal if Iran believes any signatories have not kept up their end.

Tehran has insisted that the Europeans expand their special payment system with Iran to trade in the country’s oil, a defiance of US sanctions. At present, the system only allows the trade of food and medicines.

Despite Pompeo’s warning, a purification level of 3.67 percent is still well below the roughly 90 percent needed to produce a nuclear weapon.

Since withdrawing from the JCPOA a year ago, Washington has reapplied biting economic sanctions to the Islamic Republic, targeting Iran’s energy, shipping and banking sectors, as well as the country’s military. Furthermore, the

US has threatened to sanction any country importing Iranian oil, with no exemptions.

European leaders have sought to keep the deal alive, without upsetting Washington. French President Emmanuel Macron said on Saturday that he intends to “resume dialogue” with Tehran, but cautioned that non-specific consequences “would necessarily” follow Iran’s breaking of the enrichment threshold. Britain and Germany both urged Iran to halt any further enrichment, but no European country has outright threatened sanctions.

The Trump administration’s hardline policy on Iran has stepped up in recent months, as military tensions flared in the Persian Gulf. The US accused Iran of bombing two oil tankers in the gulf, then promised retaliatory strikes when Iran downed an American spy drone late June. President Trump said that he called off the strikes at the last minute, but warned that the US was “cocked and loaded” to respond.
