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Will Iran 'Break Out' for a Nuclear Weapon, and What Can Trump Do?

by [Dennis Ross](#)

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Dennis Ross, a former special assistant to President Barack Obama, is the counselor and William Davidson Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute.



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Seeing that the president wants out of “endless Middle East wars,” Tehran seems to think that raising the pressure might get him to back off.

Iran is beginning to breach some of the limitations imposed on its nuclear program by the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which it signed in 2015 and from which the United States withdrew in 2018. Initially, Iran exceeded the stockpile of low-enriched uranium it was permitted to maintain; then it began to enrich above the 3.67 percent permitted under the deal. While enriching to just under 5 percent—well short of weapons-grade 80 to 90 percent enrichment level—the Iranians, nonetheless, are no longer respecting the limits. And, they are threatening to do much more if European nations cannot act in a way to lessen the economic impact of reimposed U.S. sanctions...

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