

# How Trump Could Still Get a Strategic Win from the Iran War

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**As long as the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened and enriched uranium is shipped out, ending the war quickly may be Washington's best bet, since Tehran would be left to deal with dire domestic problems it has no answer for.**

President Donald Trump's [announcement of a two-week pause](#) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/04/07/trump-us-iran-war-threat/>) in hostilities to work out an agreement with Iran may presage an end to this war. The fact that he emphasized in his Truth Social post that his acceptance of the suspension of our bombing of Iran was contingent on a **"COMPLETE, IMMEDIATE, AND SAFE OPENING** (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116365796713313030>) " of the Strait of Hormuz suggests how important that had become for him. Only last Wednesday in [his speech to the nation](#) (<https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-transcript-address-iran-war-b5970011fe934dde84d95d650bda56a9>), Trump had said that the Strait does not matter to us because we did not get our oil from there. However, within days the president [had pivoted](#) (<https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116351998782539414>), threatening to rain destruction down all across Iran if the Strait was not opened. He now clearly sees that Iran retaining control of the Strait, and retaining the ability to blackmail every country that uses it, would hand the United States a strategic loss in the war.

It's not clear how a final deal will be reached. With the Iranians saying the U.S. [agreed to Iran's conditions](#) (<https://edition.cnn.com/2026/04/08/middleeast/us-iran-ceasefire-explainer-war-intl-hnk>) for this pause, and Trump suggesting the [Iranians bent to his will](#) (<https://www.npr.org/2026/04/07/nx-s1-5776377/iran-war-updates>), it is a safe bet at this point that aside from public posturing there are enormous differences of interpretation on the points of the agreement. On the opening of the Strait itself, it's not clear what the Iranians have agreed to. On Wednesday, they warned that ships attempting to cross without permission [would be attacked](#)

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3w39lg84w2o>).

At least negotiations will take place, albeit under dark clouds. Trump can, and likely will, resume his threats if the Iranians balk or seem to walk back agreements. And those threats should not be easily dismissed by the Iranians: The U.S. retains all its forces in the region and could certainly hit again. But it is also safe to say that the balance of terror still holds: The Iranians stand ready to strike against their neighbors' oil, gas and desalination facilities in retaliation and retain the capacity to do so. If even only a small percentage of the Iranian missiles and drones were able to penetrate the Gulf states' defenses, the potential damage to oil and gas processing capabilities would be extensive, imposing high energy prices for some time to come.

The president has already declared several times that the U.S. has achieved its military objectives: dramatically setting back the Iranian nuclear program, its existing ballistic missiles, as well as its related defense-industrial infrastructure. A major question in the negotiations will revolve around what the Iranians will receive. They are insisting, at a minimum, on getting sanctions relief. Ironically, Trump had in practice **already conceded the lifting of sanctions** (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2026/03/20/iran-oil-sanctions-trump/>) on Iranian oil, allowing them to export their oil to keep global oil prices from going too high. The Iranians are likely to ask for the lifting of all sanctions, not only those related to the sale of their oil.

The nuclear question also remains unanswered. Trump may offer to provide Iranians fuel to power their nuclear reactors and generate electricity, provided the Iranians give up on enrichment. Even if the Iranians accept that offer, there is a big question mark about what happens to 440 kilograms of near weapons grade fissile material—and another roughly 180 kilograms of 20 percent enriched uranium. If Iran keeps all this, even if it is currently buried under rubble, it will retain the option of building a bomb—or potentially even rushing to one at some point.

One slightly better option might be to insist that Iran agrees to allow all this material to be extracted and shipped out of the country. The president claims the Iranians have agreed to allow us to do it, but the Iranians deny doing so.

Another possible template is **the deal the Obama administration struck in 2013**

(<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/09/us-russian-proposal-syria-chemical-weapons>), in which Russia took the majority of Syria's chemical weapons out of the country. But such a deal has one serious downside: It would make Russia and Iran responsible for implementation. And Russia is no neutral party or honest broker here. It would do what it can to hand the Iranian regime any lifeline.

But a lifeline is only useful if the patient can survive. And it's not clear how much time Tehran has. Before the war, the Iranian regime had no answers to any of its fundamental governance failings that produced the public uprisings in December and January. When the war fully ends, it will be even less able to deal with water and electricity cutoffs, a currency that has no value, endemic corruption and the increasing difficulty of daily life. The Iranian public will not remain quiescent for long.

Trump is wrong to say Operation Epic Fury has produced regime change. But the inner contradictions of the Islamic Republic will in time either produce an Iranian Gorbachev to try to avert regime collapse, or it will collapse outright. Provided the Strait is open and the highly enriched uranium is shipped out, ending the war as soon as possible may paradoxically hasten that day, and therefore ultimately produce a strategic win.

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