

France's defence minister voices fears that US withdrawal could aggravate regional tensions

Donald Trump's European allies are on tenterhooks awaiting his decision on whether he will pull out of the Iran nuclear deal, having spent weeks lobbying him to stay in.

The US president tweeted that he would announce the decision at 2 pm Washington time on Tuesday.

I will be announcing my decision on the Iran Deal tomorrow from the White House at 2:00pm.

— Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump) [May 7, 2018](#)

He has long threatened to withdraw from the agreement, signed during Barack Obama's presidency, and has called it the "worst deal ever negotiated" because it does not address Iran's ballistic missile programme or its role in the wars in Syria and Yemen, nor permanently block Tehran from developing atomic weapons.



President Donald Trump speaks during a round table discussion on tax reform at the Cleveland Public Auditorium in Cleveland, 5 May 2018 (Image: REUTERS)

European leaders have warned that a US withdrawal would undo years of work that led to and sustained a landmark deal that has kept nuclear weapons out of Iran's hands.

Keeping the US in the deal was a key aim of Emmanuel Macron's state visit to Washington last month, proposing a "new" accord that maintained the signatories' "common objective, we want to make sure there's no escalation and no nuclear proliferation in the region".

Boris Johnson also visited Washington on Monday, conducting talks with vice president Mike Pence and the new secretary of state Mike Pompeo.

<https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/993815373190492160>

The EU has said the deal “is working and it needs to be preserved”, but European diplomats privately said they expected Trump to withdraw from the agreement despite the frantic lobbying.

And Iran has said it will not renegotiate, threatening to retaliate if Trump pulls the US out and re-imposes sanctions, but has not said how.

Diplomats and military experts said Tehran could seek to resume its nuclear arms programme or step up its military involvement in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon.

However, Iranian president Hassan Rouhani suggested on Monday that Iran might remain in the nuclear deal even if Trump abandons it and imposes sanctions.

But he also warned that Tehran would resist US efforts to limit its influence in the Middle East.

The European countries will try to keep the deal alive even if Trump pulls out, they have indicated, to attempt to protect and foster trade with Iran that has soared since the EU lifted most of its economic sanctions on Iran.

Iran's exports - mainly fuel and other energy products - to the EU in 2016 jumped 344 percent to €5.5bn (£4.8bn) compared to the previous year, while investment in Iran jumped to more than €20bn.

Sources: CNN, Independent UK, Reuters

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