

US renews Iran sanctions waivers for nuclear work

Author:

Fri, 2019-05-03 23:30

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration on Friday renewed five of seven sanctions waivers that allow Russia and European nations to conduct civilian nuclear cooperation with Iran, even as the US steps up the pressure on Tehran, a senior US official said.

The waivers, which were due to expire Saturday, are being extended for between 45 days and 90 days, shorter periods than had been granted in the past. But they will permit work at several Iranian nuclear sites to continue without US penalties. Under the terms of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Russia and several European nations help to maintain the facilities and are engaged in converting equipment there for exclusively civilian use.

Facilities included in the waiver extensions include the Bushehr nuclear power plant, the Fordow enrichment facility, the Arak nuclear complex and the Tehran Research Reactor, the official said.

The official, who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity, said the other two waivers – one that allowed Iran to store heavy water in Oman and the other that allowed Russia to process Iranian uranium – are not being renewed.

President Donald Trump withdrew the US from the Iran nuclear deal last year, reimposed sanctions that had been eased in November and has steadily ramped up pressure on Iran in the months since.

Last month, his administration announced it would no longer renew sanctions exemptions that allowed China, India, Japan, Turkey and South Korea to continue importing Iranian oil. Those waivers expired Friday, although it was not immediately clear whether the administration would impose sanctions on some or all of those countries if they take delivery of previously purchased oil.

Some hard-liners on Iran in Congress and outside the administration have called for the elimination of all sanctions waivers, including for civilian nuclear cooperation, in order for the administration to make good on its “maximum pressure” campaign.

Supporters of the Iran deal say the cooperation waivers are important to maintain because they give the outside world additional eyes on what Iran is doing in its nuclear facilities.



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Oil dips on soaring US supply, but Iran sanctions still support crudeUS
ambassador urges Britain to ditch support for Iran nuclear deal

[OIC Islamic summit in Saudi Arabia to be held during last 10 days of Ramadan](#)

Fri, 2019-05-03 23:17

JEDDAH: The ordinary Islamic Summit is expected to be held in Makkah at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper reported. Leaders and heads of states of 57 countries from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will attend the summit, except for Syria, whose membership has been suspended.

The summit, which sources said would be held during the last ten days of Ramadan, is expected to discuss a series of key issues, with the Palestinian cause at the forefront.

The Makkah statement is also set to include several major points that serve the best interest of the Islamic countries, while stressing the importance of OIC member states' commitment to reinforcing unity and solidarity.

The 14th summit comes three years after the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held an urgent meeting to discuss the ballistic missiles targeting the holy city of Makkah.

The 13th meeting took place in Istanbul in April 2016 and resulted in 50 states, which attended the meeting, addressing the UN and demanding necessary international procedures that guarantee the aggression by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia does not happen again.

The OIC is the second biggest international governmental organization after the UN, with membership of 57 states from four continents. It represents the Islamic world and seeks to protect its interests.



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[Lebanon calls on Iran to release citizen who is US resident](#)

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Fri, 2019-05-03 15:44

BEIRUT: Lebanon is calling on Iran to use the upcoming holy month of Ramadan to grant amnesty to a Lebanese citizen who is also a US resident imprisoned there for more than three years.

The appeal for the release of Nizar Zakka came Friday in a letter sent by Lebanon's Foreign Minister to his Iranian counterpart. The letter was delivered to the Iranian ambassador to Lebanon.

Zakka, a US permanent resident, is an advocate for Internet freedom and has done some work for the US government. He has been imprisoned in Iran since his arrest in September 2015 while attending a state-sponsored conference. He was sentenced to 10 years on espionage-related charges.

In 2017, Zakka went on a hunger strike for over a month calling for his release.



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It's austerity or catastrophe, Saad Hariri tells Lebanon

Three Palestinians killed by Israeli military in Gaza

Fri, 2019-05-03 19:58

GAZA: Three Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire in the Gaza Strip Friday, authorities in the territory said, after Israel said two of its soldiers were wounded in a shooting on the border.

One of the Palestinians was shot dead along the frontier while the two others were killed in an air strike, the health ministry in Gaza said.

The Israeli army said the air strike was in retaliation for the shooting incident on the border that left its soldiers wounded.

The Gaza ministry named the men killed in the air strike as Abdullah Abu Mallouh, 33 and Alaa al-Bubli, 29, while the man killed in the clashes was 19-year-old Raid Abu Teer.

The Israeli military said it had hit a base belonging to Gaza's rulers Hamas after shots were fired at its forces along the border.

The army said "one soldier was moderately injured, and another soldier was lightly injured" when they came under fire during renewed protests.

An army spokeswoman said around 5,200 Palestinians had taken part in the demonstrations throughout the day.

Hamas did not immediately comment on the affiliation of the Palestinians killed but pledged to respond to what it called an "Israeli aggression."

Palestinians have been taking part in often violent demonstrations along the border for more than a year, calling on Israel to ease its crippling blockade of the strip.

At least 268 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the protests began in March 2018, the majority along the border.

Two Israeli soldiers have been killed in that period.

Israel accuses Hamas of using the protests as cover to carry out attacks.



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Israel targets Hamas in Gaza after 'balloon bombs' launched
Palestinian teen killed by Israeli fire in border clashes: Gaza ministry

[Guterres calls on Lebanese government to prevent Hezbollah holding weapons](#)

Fri, 2019-05-03 19:30

LONDON: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called on the Lebanese government to prevent Hezbollah and other groups from owning weapons in a report issued by the UN on Friday.

The report added that the presence of armed militias threatened Lebanon's stability and security.

It also stressed the need for the state to monopolize weapons and the use of force.

In May 2018, Guterres strongly criticized Hezbollah for operating as the most heavily armed militia and a political party in Lebanon and urged the militant group to halt military activities inside and outside the country, including in Syria.

In a report to the Security Council, Guterres also called on Lebanon's government and armed forces "to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hezbollah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity" outside the authority of the state.

"In a democratic state, it remains a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains a militia that has no accountability to the democratic, governmental institutions of the state but has the power to take that state to war," he said.

Hezbollah, which is mainly financed by Iran, is considered a terror group by the US, Canada, Israel and the Arab League.

The heavily armed group has a large militia that has taken part in Syria's civil war alongside President Bashar Al-Assad's government, and also has elected members of parliament and positions in Lebanon's national unity government.

The group's influence over Lebanese state institutions has expanded in the last year. Together with allies that view its arsenal as an asset to Lebanon, it won more than 70 of parliament's 128 seats in an election last year.

The group has taken three of the 30 portfolios in the government formed by the Western-backed Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri in January, including the health ministry – the first time it has held a ministry with a significant budget.



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Lebanon committed to reforms: PMUS targets two individuals, three entities in Hezbollah-related sanctions program