U.N. Agency Publishes Secret Iran Deal Docs On Exemptions Obama Admin Dismissed

December 25, 2016

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The Weekly Standard

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/u.n.-agency-publishes-secret-iran-deal-docs-on-exemptions-obama-admin-dismissed/article/2006049?custom_click=rss?utm_medium=twitter&utm_source=TWSAutoTweet>

Iran was given secret exemptions allowing the country to exceed restrictions set out by the landmark nuclear deal inked last year, some of which were made public this week by the United Nations nuclear watchdog and others that are likely still being withheld, according to diplomatic sources and a top nuclear expert who spoke to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on Friday posted documents revealing that Iran had been given exemptions in January that permit the country to stockpile uranium in excess of the 300 kilogram limit set by the nuclear deal, experts said. The agreements had been kept secret for almost a year, but recent reports indicated that the Trump administration intended to make them public.

TWS [reported](http://www.weeklystandard.com/democrats-challenge-obama-on-withholding-unclassified-iran-deal-docs/article/2005714) earlier in December that top Democratic senators also supported releasing the documents.

Some details of the exemptions had previously been leaked. The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) [revealed](http://isis-online.org/uploads/isis-reports/documents/JCPOA_Exemptions_Revealed_1Sept2016_Final1.pdf) in September that Iran had been allowed to exceed certain caps in the deal so that the country could come into compliance with the deal's terms.

Administration officials [dismissed](https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2016/09/261531.htm) the ISIS report at the time, and surrogates who White House officials have described as the administration's "[echo chamber](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/08/magazine/the-aspiring-novelist-who-became-obamas-foreign-policy-guru.html?_r=0)" criticized the organization.

"The administration was really nasty after we released these documents," David Albright, the founder and president of ISIS, told TWS on Friday. "It was very tough for us to get the information. ... I think that if we hadn't released, they had every intention to keep it secret. They may have given lip service to openness, but I think their intention was to keep it secret."

Albright credited the release of the documents as a step towards greater transparency, despite administration attempts to conceal the agreements.

"You just have to ask the question of, what else is being hidden?" said Albright. "The administration did it to try to minimize the chance that people would know what was in these decisions, and certainly keep those people from talking to people like me in the technical community that can actually interpret what's in those decisions."

A source who works with Congress on the Iran issue and who had been briefed on some of the exemptions confirmed that assessment.

"The Obama team was just hoping to get through the next few weeks without revealing that they've been allowing Iran to go beyond the nuclear deal the whole time," said the source. "That way the president and Secretary of State Kerry could keep declaring that Iran has been following the deal, and their echo chamber could keep saying the nuclear deal is working."

"But now it's public. The only reason that the nuclear deal is still in place is because the Obama team has been secretly rewriting to let Iran cheat. The only question is, what's still not being told?"

The now-confirmed exemptions reported on by ISIS include allowing Iran to keep low-enriched uranium (LEU) in various forms beyond what's allowed under the nuclear deal. The concession applies to forms that have been "deemed unrecoverable" for use in a nuclear weapon, and Iran has promised not to build a facility to try recover them.

That language is not in the nuclear deal, and Obama officials have struggled to defend it. At a State Department press briefing in September after the release of the ISIS report, journalists [pressed](https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2016/09/261531.htm) spokesperson John Kirby on the decision.

"You're using this term that's not in the document. I'm just trying to figure out how we can actually check that or understand what it means," said Associated Press reporter Bradley Klapper. "If you say some things are usable but some things aren't, but I don't know which are which, that's not spelled out in the document. That seems to be a new idea here."

Albright suggested to TWS that the uranium could actually be recoverable and used in a rush to a nuclear weapon. The State Department in September distorted the nature of the exemption, he said.

"If this whole thing rests on [Iran] promising not to build a facility that they'd probably only build in secret if they were going to actually break out, then this material probably should not be deemed non-recoverable," he continued. "The State Department … deliberately distorted what was in these decisions to make this point that somehow 'non-recoverable' meant [the LEU] really would never be able to be recovered, regardless if they build a facility."