Obama Admin Kept Lawmakers in Dark About Secret Iran Side Deals

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By Adam Kredo

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The Obama administration hid from Congress key information about a secret deal with Iran permitting it to maintain critical aspects of its nuclear program, according to a leading member of Congress, who exclusively told the Washington Free Beacon that these disclosures invalidate the entirety of last summer’s nuclear agreement with Iran.

The revelation of the secret deal is being described by congressional insiders as further proof the Obama administration misled lawmakers and the American public about the terms of last summer’s nuclear agreement, which was framed by top U.S. officials as the only way to stop Iran’s march toward a nuclear weapon. There “will be hell to pay” as a result of the disclosure, according to one senior congressional source apprised of the situation.

Newly obtained documents show the Obama administration negotiated a secret side agreement with Iran that removes key restrictions on its nuclear procurement efforts after a decade, paving the way for Tehran to build functional nuclear weapons within six months of the restrictions being lifted.

The terms of this arrangement undermine the credibility of the nuclear deal and call into question claims by top administration officials who promised lawmakers that the deal would block the Islamic Republic’s pathway to a bomb.

Rep. Peter Roskam (R., Ill.), a leading critic of the deal who has spearheaded efforts to block U.S. institutions from engaging with Iran, told the Free Beacon that the Obama administration had “not told lawmakers” about its secret negotiations with Iran.

“Of course the administration has not told lawmakers this and of course it’s sadly predicable,” Roskam told the Free Beacon on the sidelines of the GOP convention in Cleveland on Tuesday. “There’s no celebration in the fact that the administration has gotten this [deal] wrong at conceivably every level. It is severe news and it has to be dealt with.”

Revelations about fatal flaws in the nuclear deal invalidate the entire agreement, Roskam said.

“I don’t think there’s a way to have the nuclear deal actually limit Iran,” Roskam said. “I think it’s a false premise. I don’t think that the architecture is there for that.”

“The issue is focusing in on the world’s largest state sponsor of terror, which they continue to do with impunity,” Roskam continued. “It then begs the question: If the nuclear deal continues to be exposed as illegitimate, and manipulated, and a forgone conclusion that the administration was so hungry for it they were going to do anything, then the next question is, [how] to make sure it doesn’t get the color of approval, that it doesn’t become a fait accompli for the Iranians.”

The administration’s claims about the deal’s tough restrictions on Iran have unraveled, Roskam said. He explained that it is now nearly impossible for the United States to enforce sanctions on Iran’s nuclear procurement efforts and support for terrorism.

“The administration said time and again during the negotiations that the sanctions would snap back. The ease with which that was described, ‘Don’t worry. If they do anything wrong they’re simply going to snap back.’ Remember, the administration was also arguing at the same time, that if we don’t do this, it’s a prelude to war,” Roskam said. “Now, the administration has put itself in a position where snap back [of sanctions] is a prelude to war. And think about the high level of tolerance they have for deception by the Iranians. There’s nearly nothing the Iranians can do that the administration will describe as a violation.”

One senior congressional source who works on the issue told the Free Beacon that the most recent documents are a smoking gun showing that the administration lied to lawmakers.

“This is a big fucking deal,” said the source, who requested anonymity in order to speak frankly about the issue. “Members of Congress have been screaming from the rooftops about side deals since the deal was announced and the White House acted like they were crazy. Now we have a physical document proving President Obama lied to Congress and the American people. There will be hell to pay.”

A second source who works intimately with Congress on the Iran issue told the Free Beacon that the extent of information hidden from lawmakers could be even greater.

“This looks like another place where the Obama administration hid the ball from Congress, telling lawmakers things that were technically true but misleading about the true extent of concessions to Iran,” the source said. “The next Congress and the next administration will have a lot of work to do ensuring that this deal does not simply allow the Iranians to wait a few years and then go nuclear.”

Roskam noted that fallout from the Iran deal could be an albatross for Democratic presidential contender and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

“There’s reputational damage for the administration, there’s a loss of credibility for the administration, in terms of legacy of this issue. It largely marginalizes it in terms of Hillary Clinton’s campaign,” Roskam said.

“Going into November, she owns it. She owns every bit of this. She’s defended it. She’s articulated it. She has made clear she plans to implement it—and by contrast most Republicans are scandalized by this.”

State Department officials declined to comment directly to the Free Beacon about how this information about the deal was withheld from the public. However, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said during a press briefing Tuesday that the document was not secret—a claim refuted by reporters in the room.

“This wasn’t a document that was somehow unknown to the [negotiations countries], that was somehow unknown to those who are implementing the [deal] or the [International Atomic Energy Agency], and certainly it was not something that was unknown to Congress,” Toner maintained. “This is a, and as you note, IAEA safeguards confidential documents, and that means it’s not in the public sphere. But it’s also—and again, we’re drawing assumptions here on what this document is, but as you note, it’s Iran’s—most likely Iran’s [research and development] plan. And that was thoroughly vetted and reviewed.”

Reporters pushed back against Toner’s comments.

“There’s also no suggestion that members of Congress who might have known—might have had an interest in it might—would have been able to see” the document, one reporter noted. “No one outside that knew what it was or knew its contents.”