

Iran: Ballistic missile program not up for negotiation

Iran denies Pompeo's assertion that it is willing to negotiate over its ballistic missile program.



Iranian ballistic missile - Reuters

Iran denied on Tuesday that it was willing to negotiate over its ballistic missile program after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Iran had signaled it was ready to negotiate about its ballistic missiles, *Reuters* reported.

Pompeo appeared to be reacting to a comment by Iran's Foreign Minister that Tehran would discuss its missile program after Washington stopped arming allies the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, something the United States is unlikely to do.

His assessment drew a quick denial from the spokesman for Iran's mission to the United Nations, who wrote on Twitter, "Iran's missiles ... are absolutely and under no condition negotiable with anyone or any country, period."

Iran's ballistic missile program remains a source of concern for the West and was one of the reasons cited by US President Donald Trump when he withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal with major powers.

The Islamic Republic has carried out several ballistic missiles over the past several years. In February, Iran attempted to launch a satellite into space but failed when the satellite failed to reach orbit.

The US says that Iran's ballistic missile tests are a violation of UN Security Council resolution 2231, which enshrined Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States.

The resolution says Iran is "called upon" to refrain for up to eight years from work on ballistic missiles designed to deliver nuclear weapons.

Iran, however, denies its ballistic missile tests violate this resolution. President Hassan Rouhani has stressed in the past that Iran will continue to produce missiles for its defense and does not consider that a violation of international agreements.

The latest exchange comes amid tensions between the US and Iran, which have spiraled since Trump left the deal in May of last year.

Washington has since reimposed draconian sanctions to throttle Iran's oil trade in a policy of maximum pressure on Tehran to agree stricter limits on its nuclear capacity, curb its ballistic missile program and end support for proxy forces in the Middle East.

Two weeks ago, Iran announced that it had exceeded the amount of enriched uranium permitted under the deal. Several days later, Iran followed up by saying it had begun to enrich uranium to 5% purity instead of the 3.67% limit imposed under the JCPOA.

On Monday, Iran warned the EU that it is prepared to end all of its commitments under the 2015 nuclear and restore its nuclear program to the status quo ante, under which Tehran placed no limits on any areas of nuclear development.

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