

“What Worries Israel About Iranian Nuclear Deal?”

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website (churchofgodbigandy.com). It was posted for the weekend of May 31, 2025. (A version of the article was posted at jpost.com on May 29.)

By Yonah Jeremy Bob

JERUSALEM—If there is a nuclear deal, the latest leaks are starting to fill in the blanks.

U.S. President Donald Trump will get to say (correctly) that he got more from Iran in his nuclear deal than former U.S. presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

This would be true in at least potential areas.

Potential upgrades

- The deal would have American nuclear inspectors in Iranian nuclear facilities—and not just IAEA inspectors who are not American.
- The deal would create a complete pause in enriching uranium (even at low levels) for a symbolic time period of possibly around a year.

And yet *The Jerusalem Post* understands that top Israeli officials are far more fearful of the potential Trump nuclear deal with Iran than they were even of the 2015 JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] deal—which most of them did view as highly flawed.

Better terms than Biden

Regarding Biden, there was never a final deal, but the most progress Biden almost achieved was an Iranian freeze on 60-percent-enriched uranium.

This was part of a Biden deal in the fall of 2023, which would have led the U.S. to direct around \$6 billion of frozen funds back to the Islamic Republic.

Just before the funds were due to be transferred, however, Hamas invaded Israel, the Middle East caught fire, and the deal itself fell apart.

Better terms than Obama

Regarding Obama, he succeeded in moving Tehran back from the medium 20-percent-enriched uranium level to the low 3.67 percent level, but never got a complete pause.

Obama also got extensive IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency] nuclear inspector access to Iranian nuclear facilities, but no Americans were included.

Possible positive concessions

And there might be other concessions that Trump could get that neither Biden nor Obama got.

- He could get guarantees not to attack American forces.
- He could possibly even get some pause in certain ballistic-missile tests, which could have dual uses between conventional and nuclear warheads.

Reasons for Israel's concerns

If so, why are Israeli officials so terrified?

- There is a deep fear that the fundamental trajectory of negotiations is for Trump to cut a deal—even if it does not fulfill all of Israel's security requirements.
- Also, if Trump cuts a deal and tells Israel to stand down, this would probably not only hold it back from an attack, but also might hold it back from covert Mossad-style operations.

Unique window

This is problematic because of advanced centrifuges, advances in nuclear science and because Israel right now has a unique once-in-a-lifetime window to attack the Islamic Republic's nuclear facilities—which may not come again.

In 2015, Iran needed close to 20,000 old IR-1 centrifuges to enrich enough uranium for a nuclear weapon, and simply putting them in storage moved it a year away from the bomb.

But now, in 2025, Iran had thousands of advanced IR-4 and IR-6 centrifuges. A mere few hundred of these can be hidden in a much smaller facility than the known declared facilities at Natanz and Fordow and could get Tehran from zero to weaponized enriched uranium in only a few months.

Also, Iran now enriches to the 60 percent level with ease—which is a hop, skip and a jump from the weaponized level. But, in 2015, it had only learned how to get up to the medium 20 percent level, which means it has mastered nuclear science forever.

Benefits of previous airstrikes

Finally, Israel's Oct. 26, 2024, airstrikes removed all Iran's S-300 anti-aircraft defense systems from the board.

This means that, even as Iran still has antiaircraft defenses, what it has left against Israel's cutting-edge F-35 aircraft is almost like trying to use bow and arrows to fight against machine guns.

In contrast, while Israel hoped it had the capacity to successfully attack Iran's nuclear facilities in 2015, such an attack had never been managed before and remained a large question mark.

Add on that—at this moment, Hamas and Hezbollah are neutralized in terms of their ability to retaliate on Iran’s behalf. (In 2015, both were significant threats.) There could be no better time for the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] to attack.

Unintended consequences for Israel

All of the better nuclear deal terms that Trump is discussing so far would do two things.

- The terms would still leave Iran only a few months from a nuclear weapon.
- The terms would stop Israel from attacking at the most opportune moment it has had in decades.