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Trump's Ten Lies: A Response to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Speech

After listening to Trump's speech explaining his decision to pull out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear agreement with Iran, Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said that Trump's speech contained "[over ten lies](#)." Khamenei didn't go on to name the lies.

So, what were the lies Trump told?

Lie #1

"The Iranian regime is the leading state sponsor of terror"

The United States has long known that its ally, Saudi Arabia, and not its enemy, Iran, is the leading state sponsor of terror. All [recent attempts](#) to [link Iran to terrorism](#) have failed. Even America's own reports on terrorism don't list Iran as the leading state sponsor of terrorism. The State Department's Patterns of Global Terrorisms "[rarely identifies a terrorist incident as an act by or on behalf of Iran](#)." And, the most recent [Global Terrorism Index](#) from the Department of Homeland Security clearly states that, not Iran, but "ISIL, Boko Haram, the Taliban and al-Qaeda" are the biggest terrorist threats. None of these four groups is Shiite and none is aligned with Iran, but combined they are "responsible for 74 per cent of all deaths from terrorism." The Index also clearly identifies "ISIL," not Iran "as the deadliest terrorist group."

As The U.S. well knows, Saudi Arabia is the leading state sponsor of terror. As early as 2009, the [State Department had already declared that](#) "Saudi Arabia remains a critical financial support base for al-Qaeda, the Taliban . . . and other terrorist groups." A widely

circulated 2012 classified Defense Intelligence Agency Information Intelligence Report identified the "supporting powers" of ISIS to be "Western countries, the Gulf States and Turkey." Two years later, Vice President Biden was still making the same case against, not Iran, but Saudi Arabia: "[O]ur allies in the region were our largest problem in Syria . . . They poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad except that the people who were being supplied were Al Nusra and al-Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis." Point 4 of a memo written by Hillary Clinton on September 17, 2014 confesses that based on "western intelligence, US intelligence and sources in the region, "the US knew that "the governments of Qatar and Saudi Arabia . . . [were] providing clandestine financial and logistic support to Isis and other radical groups in the region." And, [in 2015, President "Obama](#) and other US officials urged Gulf leaders who are funding the opposition to keep control of their clients, so that a post-Assad regime isn't controlled by extremists from the Islamic State or al-Qaeda."

Lie #2

"The Iranian regime . . . supports . . . the Taliban and Al Qaeda"

After 9/11, Iran immediately sided with the U.S. against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Northern Alliance, who provided many of the anti-Taliban fighters once the Americans and her allies invaded Afghanistan, was largely put together by Iran, who placed it in the hands of the Americans. Iran offered its air bases to the US and permitted the US to carry out search and rescue missions for downed US planes. The Iranians also supplied the US with intelligence on Taliban and al-Qaeda targets. Iranian diplomats were secretly meeting with US officials as early as October 2001 to plan the removal of the Taliban and the creation of a new government in Afghanistan. At the Bonn Conference of December 2001, Iran was absolutely crucial in setting up Afghanistan's post-Taliban government.

Iran also arrested hundreds of the al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters who escaped into her borders. Iran documented the identity of more than two hundred al-Qaeda and Taliban escapees to the United Nations and sent many of them back to their homelands. For many others who couldn't be sent back to their own countries, Iran offered to try them in Iran. Iran also followed up on an American request to search for, arrest and deport several more al-Qaeda operatives that the US identified.

Lie #3

"Over the years, Iran and its proxies have bombed American Embassies and military installations, murdered hundreds of American service members, and kidnapped,

imprisoned, and tortured American citizens."

The claim that Iran has been responsible for the bombing of American military installations is highly questionable. The 1983 Hezbollah bombing of the American barracks in Beirut that killed 241 members of the American military was an attack on a military base in Beirut belonging to a foreign invader that was actively and currently bombing Lebanon.

As for the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers housing complex for American military personnel in Saudi Arabia, the case against Iran rests largely on information provided by their enemy, Saudi Arabia. Michael Scheuer, director of the Bin Laden unit, says that "a substantial body of evidence" pointed, not to Iran, but to al-Qaeda. Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett say that by 1998, even the Saudis were admitting that the bombing "was executed by Saudi hands. No foreign party was involved". Then Secretary of State Warren Christopher also declared that "there was never any adequate proof" that Iran was involved. Clinton's defense secretary, William Perry, said clearly that "al-Qaeda rather than Iran was behind" the bombing.

As for kidnapping American citizens, that was 39 years ago, and the charge ignores the context. As the Americans had used a coup against the democratically elected Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 to thwart Iran's first attempt to remove the Shah, so Iranians saw the US providing sanctuary to the Shah in 1979 as another American attempt to midwife the same fate again. As professor Vali Nasr of Tufts University has said, "In the popular mind, the hostage crisis was seen as justified by what happened in 1953".

Lie #4

"No action taken by the regime has been more dangerous than its pursuit of nuclear weapons – and the means of delivering them.

Iran is not pursuing nuclear weapons. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani [has said repeatedly](#) that "We have never pursued or sought a nuclear bomb, and we are not going to do so". Both Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and his predecessor, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, have insisted that Iran would never pursue nuclear weapons because nuclear weapons are against the precepts of Islam. [Khamenei has insisted](#) that "from an ideological and *fiqhi* [Islamic jurisprudence] perspective, we consider developing nuclear weapons as unlawful. We consider using such weapons as a big sin."

And no one really believes otherwise: not US intelligence and not Israeli intelligence.

Former CIA director and Secretary of Defense [Leon Panetta](#) asked, “Are they [Iran] trying to develop a nuclear weapon?” and succinctly and pointedly answered: “No”. The 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), representing the collective conclusions of all of America’s many intelligence agencies, said with “high confidence” that Iran was not building a nuclear weapon. [The 2011 NIE said that](#) “the bottom-line assessments of the [2007] N.I.E. still hold true. We have not seen indications that the government has made the decision to move ahead with the program”.

Yuval Diskin, the man who headed Shin Bet, the Israeli domestic intelligence agency, for six years, accused Prime Minister Netanyahu of “misleading the public on the Iran issue.” And Lieutenant-General Benny Gantz, then Chief of Staff of the Israeli Defense Forces, insisted that Iran has not “made the decision” to pursue a nuclear weapons program. Then Defense Minister Ehud Barak, [clearly stated](#) that “it is not the case” that “Iran is determined to . . . attempt to obtain nuclear weapons . . . as quickly as possible.” He added rhetorically, “To do that, Iran would have to announce it is leaving the inspection regime . . . Why haven’t they done that?”

Former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) [Mohamed ElBaradei](#) told investigative journalist Seymour Hersh that “[d]uring my time at the agency, we haven’t seen a shred of evidence that Iran has been weaponizing”.

The bottom line is that no one – not the United States, not Israel, not the International Atomic Energy Agency – ever really believed Iran was developing nuclear weapons.

Lie #5

"The deal lifted crippling economic sanctions on Iran in exchange for very weak limits on the regime’s nuclear activity"

They were not weak limits. Iran vastly reduced the number of its centrifuges and bricked in its heavy water reactor at Arak. Iran destroyed its entire stockpile of medical uranium enriched to 19.5% and no longer enriches beyond 3.67%, leaving them a legal civilian nuclear program for electricity: and even the amount of low enriched uranium Iran can keep is strictly limited to under 300kg. Its Fordow nuclear facility was converted into a nuclear, physics and technology center.

Iran agreed to submit to a highly intrusive regime of inspections and monitoring by the IAEA, including spot inspections to ensure that these goals were being met. Iran also agreed to the "use of IAEA approved and certified modern technologies including on-line enrichment measurement and electronic seals."

The agreement even limited some research and development for a specified period of time.

Lie #6

"The deal lifted crippling economic sanctions on Iran . . . at the point when the United States had maximum leverage"

Trump's assessment of the efficacy of the sanctions is a fantasy. There is no evidence that the Iranian regime was on the brink of collapse or that they were forcing the termination of Iran's civilian nuclear program. On the contrary, the sanction strategy had reached its limit and Iran was now winning the sanctions versus nuclear program enlargement battle. Trita Parsi says that, though "US intelligence services had predicted that mass demonstrations and riots would occur within months after the imposition of sanctions . . . the government in Tehran never lost control." Enrichment of uranium for peaceful civilian purposes is legal under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and Iran's right to exercise the same rights as every other country became a point of profound national pride for Iranians who stood by the Rouhani administration.

Sanctions actually had an effect opposite to the desired one. Iran escalated its building of centrifuges and grew its stockpile of low- and medium-enriched uranium to prove to the US that pressuring them through sanctions wouldn't work. Witnessing this pattern, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper brought the Senate back to reality with the assessment that "sanctions as imposed so far have not caused [Iran] to change their behavior or policy." He [added](#) that "Iran's economic difficulties probably will not jeopardize the regime."

The problem for the US was that there was only so many targets they could sanction. But Iran could keep building centrifuges and keep enriching uranium. So, while the US strategy had an endpoint, the Iranian response did not: the US ran out of things to sanction; Iran kept enriching. Sanctions wasn't going to work. They were leading to a dilemma: accept Iran's nuclear program or go to war. That led Obama to the negotiation option. And that is the concern now.

Contrary to Trump's version of history, sanctions were not bringing about the inevitable collapse of the Islamic Republic and were not producing the desired change.

Lie #7

Today, we have definitive proof that this Iranian promise was a lie. Last week, Israel published intelligence documents – long concealed by Iran – conclusively showing the Iranian regime and its history of pursuing nuclear weapons.

As his only evidence that Iran violated the JCPOA, Trump cited Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent revelation to the world of proof that "Iran lied, big time,

after signing the nuclear deal in 2015.” Netanyahu displayed binders with over 50,000 paper files and a wall of CDs that he said were packed with the proof. But the documents were not "long concealed by Iran," and they were not conclusive proof that Iran pursued nuclear weapons.

Netanyahu’s “significant new revelations” were not new at all. The binders and discs contained nothing that the IAEA hadn’t seen and dismissed the first time around. Those old attempts to discredit Iran have been carefully discredited by many experts, including Gareth Porter in *Manufactured Crisis*. The IAEA was finished with them by December of 2015.

Olli Heinonen, the chief inspector of the IAEA at the time of the JCPOA negotiations – and not someone who was in any way soft on Iran – said that the IAEA first saw the “significant new” evidence that Netanyahu revealed in 2005. Watching Netanyahu’s revelation, [Heinonen could only say](#), “I just saw a lot of pictures I had seen before.”

Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy [said](#) that, based on first reports of Netanyahu’s presentation, it “has not put into question Iran’s compliance with the JCPOA.” Mogherini said that the final word had to go to the IAEA. The day after Netanyahu’s presentation, the IAEA said that there was “no credible indications” of Iran working on a nuclear weapons program for several years before the JCPOA.

Lie #8

The agreement was so poorly negotiated that even if Iran fully complies, the regime can still be on the verge of a nuclear breakout in just a short period of time. The deal’s sunset provisions are totally unacceptable.

The most commonly called upon criticism by those hostile to the JCPOA, the "sunset" objection is a chimera. And not just because most non-proliferation agreements have the same fifteen year term this one has. The objection is disingenuous because it is based on a misreading of the agreement, or, perhaps, on not having read it at all. Many of the key restrictions referred to last much more than fifteen years. The text of the agreement specifies that Iran agreed to allow the IAEA to monitor its entire uranium supply chain for twenty-five years and all centrifuge production facilities for twenty. More importantly, though, Trita Parsi points out that “the most important restrictions and inspections instruments are permanent, according to the Additional Protocol to the Nonproliferation Treaty.” Iran commits in the JCPOA to a schedule for ratifying the Additional Protocol.

Lie #9

"Making matters worse, the deal's inspection provisions lack adequate mechanisms to prevent, detect, and punish cheating and don't even have the unqualified right to inspect many important locations, including military facilities."

The JCPOA clearly states that inspectors can get access to military sites if the IAEA has credible evidence that suspicious activity is occurring on the site. [The IAEA says](#) that there has been no credible evidence of suspicious activity and that "Washington has not provided such indications to back up its pressure on the IAEA to make such a request."

IAEA chief Amano Yukiya defended the inspections as the world's "[most robust nuclear verification regime](#)."

Lie #10

Not only does the deal fail to halt Iran's nuclear ambitions, but it also fails to address the regime's development of ballistic missiles that could deliver nuclear warheads.

The deal was never meant to address Iran's ballistic missiles, and their ballistic missiles are incapable of delivering nuclear warheads.

Resolution 2231, approved in support of the JCPOA, "calls upon" Iran "not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons" for a defined period of time. Iran insists they are in compliance with this requirement because the missiles are defensive and are designed to carry a conventional payload: the missiles are not capable of being nuclear armed. Iran expert Gareth Porter says that Iran's "ballistic missiles were not designed for nuclear weapons." Porter cites [experts who say](#) that "Iran's medium-range missiles have been designed for conventional deterrence," and that "Iran would have to redesign at least the internal components of the missile to adapt it to carrying nuclear weapons."

Besides, since Iran verifiably does not have a nuclear weapons program, that the missile cannot carry a nuclear weapon becomes tautological. Similar earlier American claims about Iranian nuclear missiles have all been embarrassingly [discredited](#).

Lie #11

"It has now been almost 40 years since this dictatorship seized power and took a proud nation hostage."

Leaving aside that the revolution almost forty years ago seized power from an American/British imposed dictatorship that the Americans and British brought to power with a coup against the overwhelmingly popularly elected Mohammad Mosaddeq, the Iranian regime did not take "a proud nation hostage." Iran experts Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett say that "at every step along the way – from an initial referendum

on the establishment of an Islamic republic, through elections for a constituent assembly to draft its constitution, to the ratification of that constitution – Khomeini would ask for and receive the Iranian public’s overwhelming support.” They go on to show just how great support for the new government was in 1979: “less than two months after the revolution’s triumph, a referendum was held to decide whether a postrevolutionary Iranian state should be, as Khomeini had pledged, an Islamic republic. Well over 90 percent of eligible voters turned out: 98.2% of them voted yes.”

Ooops, that’s eleven!

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