

President Trump Confronts Iran

While his administration has begrudgingly conceded Iran is technically in compliance with the nuclear agreement it worked out with the Obama administration, President Donald Trump made it clear over the weekend he's none too happy with the Islamic Republic.

Iran still holds a number of Americans hostage, imprisoned on trumped-up charges of espionage or the like. And in the following statement released by the White House, the president made it clear there will be a heavy price to pay—literally—if those Americans aren't brought back home soon.

"President Donald J. Trump and his administration are redoubling efforts to bring home all Americans unjustly detained abroad," the statement reads. "The United States condemns hostage takers and nations that continue to take hostages and detain our citizens without just cause or due process.

"For nearly 40 years, Iran has used detentions and hostage taking as a tool of state policy, a practice that continues to this day with the recent sentencing of Xiyue Wang to 10 years in prison. Iran is responsible for the care and well-being of every United States citizen in its custody. President Trump urges Iran to return Robert Levinson home, who has been held for over 10 years, and demands Iran release Siamak and Baquer Namazi, who were taken during the Obama administration, along with all other American citizens unjustly detained by Iran.

"President Trump is prepared to impose new and serious consequences on Iran unless all unjustly imprisoned American citizens are released and returned."

A new round of economic sanctions would be a heavy blow to

Iran, which is just now emerging from the crippling blow that years of previous sanctions had inflicted after the Obama administration began lifting them in response to the nuclear deal. President Hassan Rouhani was re-elected earlier this year because of that economic rebound.

If you don't think there's a specific timing to President Trump's message to Iran, think again. A major rift is developing between Rouhani and the hardline Mullahs who effectively rule the country, which has led to the detention of the president's own brother. This will certainly ratchet up the pressure on Rouhani, who still has the support of the people, but could easily lose it if another economic collapse comes to their country. {eoa}