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Tehran will 'quickly' restart nuclear program if EU fails to negotiate with Iran – Russian deputy FM

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Tehran can easily restore its nuclear potential if the EU succumbs to the US pressure to reinstall sanctions against Iran, which were lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal (also known as the JCPOA), a top Russian diplomat has said.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Thursday that Iran hadn't yet violated its commitments under the nuclear accord with world powers. Tehran still stores less than 130 tons of heavy water – material used as the neutron moderator in the reactors.

However, it will exceed the limits if JCPOA members won't find solutions *"first of all to ensure the legitimate economic interests of the Islamic republic,"* the deputy FM said after a meeting with his Iranian counterpart in Tehran.

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Ryabkov added, that there is *"no doubt Iran can quickly restore uranium enrichment up to 20 percent"* as it had done before the JCPOA capped that level to 3.67 percent. The diplomat, however, dismissed concerns about this potential breach of the JCPOA terms as an *"abstract"* threat. He said that in order to keep Iran's nuclear program under control, it is important to secure Tehran's participation in the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) *"regardless of what fate will befall the JCPOA."*

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The JCPOA was signed in 2015 by Iran, the US, Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and China to put limits on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for the lift of sanctions. However, last year Donald Trump's administration unilaterally withdrew from the deal, reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran and started pushing other countries to cut ties with Tehran. Washington says Iran continues to pursue nuclear arms, a claim Tehran has constantly denied.

Russia proposed a set of its own "*full-frame*" measures to save the JCPOA which it hopes to further work on with Iran and other "*sensible parties*," Ryabkov told RT after the bilateral talks. Moscow also urged all JCPOA partners to meet as soon as possible to work out a roadmap which "*won't let the situation to degrade*."

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