Time for Trump to trigger the UN snapback on Iran

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In the last few weeks, the United Nations’ nuclear watchdog revealed that Iran is hindering an investigation into a secret nuclear facility where uranium has been detected. Its proxies in Lebanon attacked Israel.

And the Iranian military committed an act of war by launching cruise missiles at Saudi Arabia — taking out 5% of the world’s oil production overnight in an attempt to harm our economy and thwart President Trump’s “maximum pressure” campaign against its regime.

After that last attack, the ayatollahs’ foreign-minister puppet Javad Zarif threatened “all-out war” should Saudi Arabia or the United States respond militarily. This week he’ll be in New York for the UN General Assembly.

There’s no doubt that the catastrophic Obama-Iran nuclear deal, which flooded the Iranian regime with hundreds of billions of dollars in cash and sanctions relief, directly contributed to the recent attacks.

The deal didn’t just provide Iran with resources it poured into its military; it also created an incentive for the international community to ignore Iranian aggression for the sake of preserving the deal, emboldening the Iranians to launch exactly these sorts of attacks.

The question is what to do about the attacks. On Friday, the Trump administration took a sound and necessary first step by imposing sanctions on Iran’s terror-financing banks. But unless we take additional action soon, this new pressure will be drowned out by the sanctions relief Iran is about to receive at the international level as a result of the catastrophic Obama-Iran nuclear deal.

The problem is the structure of the deal itself, which was locked in by UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2231. Over the next few years, this resolution requires the permanent termination of UN restrictions on Iran’s arms trade, ballistic-missile development, uranium enrichment and plutonium-related work. These are the infamous “sunset clauses” built into the deal that lift all the UN’s nuclear and even non-nuclear restrictions on Iran.

In other words, without action, UNSCR 2231 will soon bulldoze what few speed bumps remain at the international level to slow down the full development and deployment of Iran’s nuclear program and aggression. That was the price Iran demanded when the Obama-Iran nuclear deal was signed — and the Obama administration was all too willing to comply.

There is, however, a way to reverse course, prevent international pressure from evaporating forever and restore the restrictions lifted by the deal: the so-called snapback mechanism, which allows any of the original parties of the deal, in effect, to reverse the resolution.

Next week would be an appropriate time for the Trump administration to invoke that provision. After all, Iran’s own admission that it has begun nuclear-related work that violates the deal gives Washington just cause for such a move.

President Trump’s courageous decision to withdraw from the nuclear deal and implement a strategy of maximum pressure against Iran was the single most important national security decision of his presidency. Allowing these sanctions to expire would undermine all of that.

Meanwhile, we must continue to pressure the Iranian regime economically. Our maximum-pressure strategy against Iran has proven predictably powerful despite dire warnings from the Iran echo chamber that it wouldn’t work. Fact is, our economy dwarfs Iran’s, and the dollar is the global currency. If we have the will, we can cut off Iran from the global financial system, forcing third-party actors to choose between us or them.

Right now, our European allies are coordinating with the ayatollahs to circumvent our sanctions through a range of schemes. Some of these are new financial structures, while others involve extending billions and billions in credit, including a French proposal that would provide $15 billion.

All would enrich the regime, even as it launches attacks across the Middle East and blocks access to the nuclear facilities suspected of links to Iran’s nuclear-weapons program.

Last Congress, a bill I introduced, the Blocking Iranian Illicit Finance Act, would fully cut off Iran from the global financial system, limiting its ability to move whatever revenue it does manage to get. I plan to introduce an updated version in the coming months that addresses new developments and efforts to evade our sanctions.

Enough is enough. The Iranian regime openly threatens “all-out war” and seeks weapons that could incinerate American cities with a single flash of light. The nuclear deal legalized Iran’s nuclear program and lifted international sanctions against its aggression. It’s time to tear up that deal once and for all.