

# Patrick Henningsen: Is the new US-Iran MOU a real deal or a stalling tactic?

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## #Nima

What was reported, we have the latest report on Axios that Iran is not honest in the way it's negotiating with the United States regarding the nuclear program. They say something to officials in the United States, but behind the scenes, they're doing something else. This report cited the head of the CIA, John Ratcliffe. Then later on, we had Israel Hayom reporting that Donald Trump is considering dismissing several senior officials who opposed the Iran deal, including Secretary of War Pete Haxett and CIA Director John Ratcliffe. And in this new report, it says a senior U.S. official was quoted as saying the argument has been settled. Those who oppose it may pay a personal price.

And he says that the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio, is not currently believed to be at risk because he has been careful not to publicly criticize the agreement. This is the situation with Donald Trump on one side. And as we know, the main problem exists in Lebanon. You talk with everybody in Iran, in Lebanon, in the axis of resistance, the main issue is Lebanon right now, not anything else. And when Israel is going to, we had moments ago before coming to this live, I think an hour ago, we had the Iranian foreign minister saying that without Lebanon, there would be no agreement. And withdrawal from Lebanon is one of the most important points. Israel has to withdraw from Lebanon.

And we know in the aftermath of the announcement of the MOU, people are getting back to their homes in the southern part of Lebanon, and they're feeling the Israelis are still there. Some sort of fights are happening, little fights between the two sides. And this is the whole issue right now. Today, Donald Trump had a meeting with the head of Qatar, the Qatari emir, in which he said that without Donald Trump, there would be no Israel on this planet, and this sort of argument that he's making, that without Donald Trump, Israel would have been destroyed totally, and because of him, Israel exists today, and these sorts of arguments on his part. But when it comes to what's going on in the Trump administration, do you think what was reported in Israeli media is serious?

## #Patrick

I'm not sure, Nima. You know, the last 72 hours, I try not to watch the tennis match too much.

## **#Nima**

By the way, the other point is that Israel was asking the U.S. over and over to have some sort of understanding of the memorandum, the MOU. They wanted to know what's in it. So far, they were rejected, based on Channel 12 of Israel.

## **#Patrick**

Yeah, they've been kept in the dark. And all of Israel's proxies in the U.S. media, like Mark Levin, are hyperventilating. You know, like someone needs to hand him a paper bag. He's in danger. They say, I can't believe this, this is unacceptable. We can't see the terms of the deal. So that's why Israel wants to merge their intelligence with the U.S., so that they can not only have access to everything but also be involved in controlling it. They already have enough influence and control from John Ratcliffe and others that are basically Israeli proxies embedded in major U.S. agencies. These are people wholly loyal to the state of Israel.

But besides that, you watch the tennis match go back and forth, and you can get dizzy watching this if you follow it hour by hour. But if you just take a step back and look at the fundamentals here, the fundamentals are very simple. Unless Israel is prepared to withdraw from Lebanon—and I don't believe they'll do that of their own volition—they have to be threatened. The only credible deterrence for Israel withdrawing from South Lebanon is, you could say, if the skirmishes with Hezbollah went on long enough and Israel lost enough men—let's say they lost maybe 500, 600 men over the next eight to twelve months—then there might be some political pressure back in Tel Aviv to say, look, that's enough.

We've done enough here, and then they could pull back. But that's no guarantee they're not going to return in the future, because they're back again. They've already occupied South Lebanon twice before, and they've returned now for a third go. So that's the problem with that. So if the U.S. threatens them, threatens to withhold arms to Israel, do you really think that any U.S. president, with the amount of control the lobby has over Congress and the Senate and the press, do you really think even Trump, even Superman, could come down and sit behind that desk and then deny Israel arms and military support? It's quite frankly impossible. That's my opinion. Trump is not brave enough to do that.

I mean, I can't imagine the pressure that he would be under. I mean, it was insane. Look at the pressure he's under already with just putting a memorandum of understanding on the table. So to me, that's not going to happen. So if that's a deal breaker, then this MOU—and it's important—I've been watching tons of podcasts the last three days and mainstream media reporting, and everybody's saying there's a peace agreement. There is no peace agreement. This is an MOU. Basically, this is an agreement to negotiate over the next 18 to 24 months. And there are many different phases within that time frame of two years and many different road signs that you need to reach to go to the next one.

So I'm looking at that and I'm thinking there are so many points of failure potentially, because the terms that the U.S. is interpreting and wanting versus what Iran has presented are very divergent. So to me, at this moment in time—maybe this could change in the future with more talks—but this can't happen. There can't be a peace agreement based on the divergence of the two parties. And the other problem is, it's not—this is the problem, Nima—with this whole conversation, is that the media and everybody are saying this is a U.S.-Iranian deal. This is not. This is the U.S. and Israel.

Israel is quietly behind the U.S. They're part of this. They're an absolute party to the conflict. They started the war in the first place. And Iran. So it's not fair to Iran to allow Israel to be an invisible partner in this negotiation or, quote, deal. It's deceptive, and it allows Israel so much latitude to act independently. And they can choose and reserve the right to undermine, to sabotage anywhere along the line. Let's just look at Israel's record for a moment. Let's take the Oslo Peace Accords, peace process as an example. How long was that strung out for, 12 years, 10 or 12 years? And Israel sabotaged that at every single key moment. And they did that by moving the goalposts and violating expectations and then using the media and all these political operatives they have and proxies in Washington to reframe it that the Palestinians have done something bad here and we had to do this for our security.

And oh, by the way, we're building 600,000 settlements. And by the way, the territory you thought you had back in 1990, that's not there anymore. So we were negotiating about a full pizza, but here we are 10 years later and you've only got a slice left. Sorry about that. And if you reject the deal, then it's your fault. The Palestinians rejected a perfectly good deal. And that's exactly what Israel and the U.S. are going to try to do—maneuver Iran into a position where they start eating the pizza and then, over time, kicking the can down the road and blaming the Iranians. I'm telling you right now, I know the United States very well. What they're doing in this deal is they may appear to be in some kind of a positive direction now.

And they may even get to the point of signing an agreement in six months or a year. But nine out of ten times, the U.S. will then change their position and do something that would violate the terms of the deal and then blame Iran for retaliating or for violating, and not blame themselves. And it's even more dangerous because Israel can do the job of sabotaging it, and the United States can say, we tried, but we have no control. That's Bibi. That's why all this sort of WWF WrestleMania between Trump and Bibi, to me, is just absolute nonsense—meaningless theater—and it's designed to misdirect people into that sort of political drama as a sideshow when, in fact, the two countries are completely integrated, completely enmeshed.

And the United States has no interest. Their stated policy is regime change in Tehran, and it's the disarmament and the evisceration of Hezbollah. That is the U.S. policy. And so if that's Israel's policy as well, and that's the U.S.'s policy, the U.S. will say to the Iranians, you have to renounce Hezbollah, ever wanting to pursue a nuclear weapon. Everyone's tweeting right now, Fox and J.D. Vance, and saying Iran has agreed to not pursue a nuclear weapon. What does that mean? They're

not pursuing one. So that's a straw man argument, but they're hanging everything around that in America to try to sell it like this is some high-level nuclear negotiation, and it's not. Iran's not developing a nuclear weapon.

They haven't been developing a nuclear weapon. There's no evidence they're developing a nuclear weapon. But by hanging it on that big sort of marquee, high-profile, high-value issue, it justifies all of the sort of, let's say, problems and mistakes that the United States has made and gives the impression like they're really playing for the big sort of prize up there, which is Iran can't have a nuclear weapon, when in reality it's not about that. It's about all these other very smaller issues, relatively smaller issues like Lebanon, which is actually fundamental in all of this because they can't, for many reasons—you know, Iran's not going to allow that, because ultimately that's going to end up causing—Syria will soon be involved.

And then when Syria's involved, then it's a problem for Iran. Then it's a problem for the region. And so Israel cannot be allowed to attack Syria and bomb and kill everybody in their radius with impunity. It just can't happen because that's exactly what they've done to Iran. So Iran knows the source of the problems in the region is Israel. It's not us. It's Israel. And we're not going to allow Israel to use that to gain leverage over us and everyone else and our allies in the region by killing Lebanese and Palestinians in Gaza. And Israel, guess what? They've been doing that all the time. They're cutting off aid to Gaza after an Iranian missile strike.

They're using these people they're killing and starving and blockading as leverage. That's why Iran has moved to this higher level strategically of negotiations and putting Lebanon first, and they could very easily put Gaza right there, and that would really put Israel in a bind. And this will only work under threat of deterrence. And that's it. You know, because Nima... In international relations, which you're very familiar with, you have a term called normative power. And a normative power is a country that has established itself, is credible in the international system, so much so that they can dictate policies based on human rights, morals, and ethics—okay, rule sets. But you can be a normative power. But to be a superpower, you have to be a normative power who can then back up that policy enforcement with military force, hard force.

That makes you a superpower. What is Iran doing right now? Exactly that. So just by definition of the exchange of what we've seen unfold over the last couple of weeks, it makes, de facto, Iran a world—they're behaving like a world superpower. They may not be economically a global superpower, but I would say regionally, they absolutely are a regional superpower. And I would even argue that they've put themselves in the lead position of superpower in the region, not because they have a bigger army than Turkey, not because they have a bigger air force than Turkey, or not because they have a bigger air force than Israel, or even Saudi Arabia in some cases has much bigger conventional forces in certain areas than Iran has. That's not what makes you a superpower.

What makes you a superpower is that you are a normative power, you're predictable, you're rational, and you back it up with hard power. And only Iran is the only country in the region that's doing that. And Hezbollah is doing the same thing. Hezbollah attacked north Israel after October 7th for the express reason Hassan Nasrallah said. North Israel, you mean? North Israel, pardon me. North Israel. Drawing Israeli forces away from Gaza to save lives, to stop, at least temporarily stop, the genocide. Hezbollah sacrificed themselves for that. And it was in their interest, it's in Lebanon's interest in many ways to do this as well, because this is a regional threat, a regional problem. As we can see, by allowing Israel to act and carry out a genocide in Gaza, and the world sat back and did nothing, they endorsed this genocide, and that gave Israel the green light to do it again.

In South Lebanon, Hezbollah knew this. That's why Hassan Nasrallah did what he did. But Israel took that and, with an over-the-top reaction, used that as a license to, you know, just completely pulverize villages, towns, and cities in Lebanon. And again, the world community is sitting back and it's just, do we oppose this or not? What should we do? Maybe we'll sanction them. We're not sure. It's Israel, so we've got to be careful not to, you know, criticize Israel because, you know, that could be, you know, a problem, whatever. But that's—so Hezbollah, as a semi-state actor, has shown normative traits as an organization.

And they're completely betrayed by the government in Beirut, who are absolute stooges, puppets of Saudi Arabia, the United States, and behind the scenes, really, Israel. And that's a shame. That's very sad for Lebanon. But I think they're changing their position as well. They've come under a lot of pressure in the last week. And why? Why is the Lebanese government under pressure? Why did Joseph Aoun change his position after the interview with Christiane Amanpour? You remember, it was a disaster for Joseph Aoun. Why? The pressure came. Where is that pressure coming from, Nima? That pressure is coming from the actions of Iran. And if Iran stays, as I said to you in our previous conversation, if Iran just sticks to their principles, do not budge on principle.

Do not budge. Then eventually the world will conform to that reality that Iran is not moving, and they have to blame somebody, though, for this conflict, and they start blaming Israel. And guess what's happening? People are now stepping up. European countries are filing sanctions against Israel. Why? It's purely for one reason, Nima. It's because Iran was steadfast. That's it. And Iran is a normative power, willing to back it up—a regional superpower by definition. In international relations textbooks, you can absolutely make this statement, and it is absolutely true by definition. They've ticked all the boxes for that. That means they're able to influence outcomes. What are we watching right now? Exactly that.

## **#Nima**

Here is what the Iranian foreign minister said regarding the MOU. From our perspective, there are two sides in this MOU. One side is the United States and Israel. On the other side, there is Iran and Hezbollah. He's not mentioning Lebanon. It's Iran and Hezbollah. Remember, the government in

Lebanon is not at war with Israel. The war is happening between Israel and Hezbollah because Hezbollah is defending Lebanon.

## **#Patrick**

Actually, continue where you left off, Nima. Don't forget. But Lebanon has been officially at war with Israel for 75 years. That's official. No diplomatic relations. So technically, according to international law, Lebanon has been and is at war with Israel. That hasn't been resolved yet. That goes right back to 1948. So that's the technicality, and that's why they have provisions in their constitution that they can't meet with Israeli heads of state. Israel can't come into Lebanon, Israeli companies can't come in, and IDF soldiers can't enter the country.

And all of those have been broken by this government. They've allowed all sorts of people, including U.S. envoys that have served in the IDF—Amos Hochstein, former IDF soldier—you know, swanning around Beirut, illegal. And Morgan Ortagus, the U.S. Tom Barrack's sidekick, she was wearing a Star of David in meetings and publicly in Beirut. That was a power move, basically, by the Israel lobby saying, we're here and you're going to do what we say. And so, yeah. So anyway, continue what you were going to say.

## **#Nima**

And it continues. An end to the war in Lebanon is an inseparable part of the complete end of the war in the region, and a complete end to the war includes a withdrawal of all the forces from the occupied areas. Without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the land it occupied during this war, it won't be considered a complete end to the war. Any military attack by Israel against Lebanon from now on, or the continuation of Israeli occupation inside Lebanon, will definitely be considered a violation of the MOU. I don't know what else they can put out. It's totally obvious what the Iranian position is when it comes to Lebanon. And today, in the meeting Donald Trump had with the Qatari emir, he said that Israel cannot do the job when it comes to Lebanon. Maybe we have to use Syria. So Israel has to back down, Syria comes in, and the whole agenda again, the same.

## **#Patrick**

No, no, that's a violent civil war in Lebanon. So they're saying we're going to send al-Qaeda into Lebanon, and that's going to kick off a sectarian bloodbath. They're guaranteed. And then Israel will use that sectarian bloodbath to move in even further and occupy and take and seize all the land below the Litani River. But don't believe the Israelis that they will stop at the Litani River, because they will then require a buffer zone above the Litani River and all the way up into the Shuf area. And then the Beqaa Valley after that, and then they'll want the offshore water, you know, everything offshore along that line. And they will keep that.

They're not going to give it back because that's where all the rich gas deposits are, you see. That's a lot of what this is actually about. For Israel, it's fresh water, fertile, very profitable agricultural land in South Lebanon, as well as their strategic objectives and then the offshore resources. That's the long-term benefit for expanding Israel. I mean, they've done it before, so why would you think that they wouldn't do this again? So that's the other thing. But if they keep framing this as Hezbollah versus Trump, Israel, this is the problem, Nima, because Hezbollah is part of Lebanon. They have half the parliament as the Hezbollah party. But the West and Israel, by doing this, they can isolate Hezbollah.

## **#Nima**

Because my understanding, Patrick—sorry for interrupting you—the reason that the foreign minister of Iran mentioned Hezbollah instead of Lebanon is that the government in Lebanon is not serving the people. They're pursuing the Israeli-American agenda. That's why when you say the government—and the war, by the way, is not happening between Israel and the government in Lebanon—it's between Israel and Hezbollah. And whenever they're talking about negotiations or any sort of talks, Hezbollah is not part of it. And the agreements they've made so far, it's all about the two parties. One of them is not at all in the fight.

## **#Patrick**

That's it. You've nailed it. That's the source of the problem. This is framed incorrectly. And because it's framed incorrectly, it allows so much leeway for all sorts of foreign interference, sabotage, division. If Lebanon, if the government had solidarity, if the country was united, if the Arabs in Lebanon were united and treated Hezbollah as what they actually are, which is a South Lebanese militia, a very well-regulated and effective militia defending their southern border—because the Lebanese armed forces will not do that and cannot do that, because they don't have the men, the equipment, or quite frankly, they don't want to engage with the IDF. And that's why, Nima, back at the end of the Lebanese Civil War—you remember back in 1991, before Rafiq Hariri became prime minister—all the different factions had to disarm, but they allowed one faction to keep their arms, didn't they?

And guess what faction that was? Hezbollah. Why? Because they needed somebody to defend the southern border. And that's why. So there's history and precedent to Hezbollah and their role. And the reason the Lebanese armed forces—I've said this before many times, I'm not sure to you—is because America will not allow the Lebanese armed forces to have any equipment. They forbid them to have air defense. They can't have aircraft. Can you imagine this? What kind of an army are you? You're not allowed to have fighter jets. You're not allowed to have anti-aircraft. You're not allowed to protect your airspace. What are you? You're a gendarmerie.

You're just a jumped-up domestic security force. That's what they are. And that's because the U.S. micromanages and has total control over that. Why does the U.S. do that? Because that particular

policy vis-à-vis Lebanon is absolutely controlled by the Israel lobby and Netanyahu's office. So that's how far this Israeli influence stretches, all the way to Washington and back to Beirut. Do people understand this? If people understand this, all of this that we're talking about makes perfect sense. And that's why it should be Lebanon, a united Lebanon, negotiating with Israel and the U.S.—that's a totally different story.

If Lebanon could unite and hold to principles of international law, which Hezbollah is adhering to—Hezbollah, by international law standards, has a very, very clean record compared to the Israelis. So if that's the case, then the reason allies cannot come to support other allies—Lebanon has many allies, Nima. Many allies. There are a lot of countries that have a lot invested in Lebanon: the French, the Italians, the Germans, a lot of European countries. The EU spends a lot of money in Lebanon. There are thousands and thousands of NGOs—I don't know how many, 20,000 NGOs in Lebanon. The most NGOs of anywhere on the planet, okay?

The reason they're not getting direct support against Israel is because they're not united. If they were united, then that frees up and allows other people to come in and support them and pressure Israel. But because they're divided and so divisive, and the United States has got such a free hand to manipulate everything, that's why external countries can't come in and build a wall of solidarity against Israel. And that's by design. That's the whole point of all U.S.-Lebanese relations: divide and rule. Keep them weak. Keep them off balance. Keep their economy teetering on the edge of disaster. All of that. That's absolutely intentional policy. Get them totally dependent on developmental loans from the UN, the IMF, the U.S. government, USAID money, NGO money—that's what they live on there.

They become so dependent that they develop Stockholm Syndrome from their controller. Yes, yes, America. Meanwhile, their country is disintegrating because of this. So, you know, if the president is a president for all Lebanese, then he's doing his job. If he's not, then he should step down, quite frankly, because he's not doing his job. Or he needs to be, like, removed from office in the nicest possible way. But it's not real leadership there because they have a confessionalist system that is so outdated. It's archaic. The Maronite Christian president, the Sunni prime minister, and the Hezbollah speaker of the House based on a census from 1958. Hello. What would today's census be? President would be Shiite Hezbollah party, prime minister would be Sunni, and the speaker of the parliament would be Maronite Christian. End of story.

But they should just get away with the whole confessional system because this is the same problem, Nima, that—this is why Iraq is a basket case. Because the British, and then the Americans afterwards, always wanted to have a minority in charge of a majority. And look what it led to. And then they're kicking up and screaming in Washington after the fall of Saddam Hussein that Maliki or some other Shiite leader emerges and is prime minister and so forth. And they're just like, oh, the Shiites are in charge in Iraq. They're the majority. That's not right. It's like, that was the problem,

and this was by design. Same thing in Lebanon. So look, those are the fundamentals, as I see it, of the problem there. And that means that if this can't be resolved politically, it's going to get resolved on the battlefield. And that's, unfortunately for the peace agreement, that's the problem.