



## Iran condemns new USA missile sanctions

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China lodged an official protest with the United States today over new U.S. sanctions on Iran that target a Chinese business tied to Tehran's ballistic missile programme.

"This ongoing review does not diminish the United States' resolve to continue countering Iran's destabilising activity in the region, whether it be supporting the Assad regime [in Syria], backing terrorist organisations like Hezbollah, or supporting violent militias that undermine governments in Iraq and Yemen", the acting assistant secretary of state for near eastern affairs, Stuart Jones, said in a separate statement.

Wednesday's sanctions target Iranian military officials along with an Iranian company and China-based network accused of supplying Iran with materials for ballistic missiles, the State Department said.

The Trump administration announced Wednesday it is extending the sanctions relief for Iran set forth in the nuclear deal signed with the Islamic Republic in 2015, despite President Donald Trump's election campaign pledge to "dismantle" the agreement. However Tillerson said the White House will "evaluate whether suspension of sanctions **related** to Iran pursuant to the [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action] is vital to the national security interests of the United States".

Richard Nephew, a former USA negotiator with Iran now at Columbia University, called the renewal an "important step" in maintaining the deal but said it was still threatened by "congressional pressure, Republican politics, and the views of many people" in the Trump administration.

The agreement must be renewed every 120 days, or about every four months.

However, the US Treasury issued fresh sanctions against specific officials and a Chinese business with links to Iran's missile programme.

"The worst deal I think I've ever seen negotiated that you started is the Iran deal".

The US is continuing to review whether it should continue honouring the nuclear deal. Under the 2015 nuclear agreement, the US lifted those sanctions.

But for now, Trump seems to be abiding by the Iran deal.

However, taking something of a carrot and stick approach, it simultaneously imposed new measures aimed at punishing Tehran for its ballistic missile development programme, human rights record and support for the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

Foreign Minister of Iran Mohammad Javad Zarif calls USA sanctions bluff. "Categorically", former Undersecretary of State Wendy Sherman - who led the U.S. negotiating team at the Iran nuclear talks - said at a panel hosted by the Cato Institute on Tuesday, which included this reporter. "This pattern of behavior must come to an end", the report said.