

Neocons Bolton and Pompeo Are Leading Push for Regime Change in Iran

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"Although the Trump administration claims it only seeks 'behavior change' in Iran, its pressure campaign clearly aims at regime change."



From left, Bolton, Pompeo, Pence

In writings and speeches over just the past several months, President Donald Trump's national security adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have made no secret of their desire to overthrow the Iranian government.

According to a Reuters [report](#) published on Saturday, their desire may finally be converting into concrete action, now that the two ultra-hawks have a firm grip on America's foreign policy apparatus.

"The Trump administration has launched an offensive of speeches and online communications meant to foment unrest and help pressure Iran to end its nuclear program and its support of militant groups," Reuters reported, citing anonymous U.S. officials familiar with the effort. "More than half a dozen current and former officials said the campaign, supported by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton, is meant to work in concert with U.S. President Donald Trump's push to economically throttle Iran by re-imposing tough sanctions."

The new initiative—which the White House refused to discuss with Reuters—comes just weeks after Pompeo unveiled what critics described as a wildly unrealistic set of demands that Iran must meet if it wishes to engage in nuclear discussions with the United States. In May, Trump officially violated the seven-nation Iran nuclear accord, but Iran has worked in concert with European nations to keep the deal alive and has repeatedly stated that it is not developing nukes and has no desire to do so.

The White House's deliberate "pressure" campaign was also revealed just 24 hours before Pompeo is set to deliver a speech in California on Sunday that is benignly titled "Supporting Iranian Voices."

Far from what its title would suggest, National Iranian American Council (NIAC) vice president for policy Jamal Abdi argued in a [statement](#) that Pompeo's speech is a blatantly cynical effort to "exploit" Iranian-Americans with the goal of advancing the Trump administration's aggressive regime change push.

"What President Trump and Secretary Pompeo want is to exploit Iranian Americans and co-opt the Iranian people to provide legitimacy for the Trump administration's Iraq War redux for Iran," Abdi said. "Just as the Bush administration cultivated a few Iraqi exiles and talked about human rights to provide legitimacy for a disastrous invasion of Iraq, the Trump administration appears intent on using Iranian exiles to advance dangerous policies that will leave the Iranian people as its primary victims."

"It should be abundantly clear that Secretary Pompeo, who called for bombing Iran instead of negotiations, is no friend of the Iranian people," Abdi added. "As Americans, we have a vital role to play in ensuring our democratically elected government does not start wars on false pretenses or destroy lives in our names. As Iranian Americans, our voices are particularly vital when it comes to the U.S. government's efforts regarding our ancestral homeland. We will not be exploited or silenced at this critical moment in history."

In an article for the New York Review of Books on Friday, NIAC president Trita Parsi echoed his colleague's assessment of Pompeo's planned speech, calling it "part of a deliberate policy of escalating tensions with Iran, targeting its economy, and supporting Iranian opposition groups—all for the purpose of pressuring and destabilizing Iran."

To protest Pompeo's speech in California, NIAC ran a full-page letter ([pdf](#)) in Sunday's Los Angeles Times arguing that "a U.S.-sponsored regime change in Iran (in the image of Iraq) will not bring about democracy in Iran but rather destabilize the country and put democracy out of the reach of the Iranian people.

"Iran's only chance to achieve a sustainable democracy that reflects the wishes of its people comes from a process driven by the people of Iran, for the people of Iran. In short, change must come from inside of Iran—not from Washington or anywhere else," the letter concludes.

In an address to a group of diplomats on Sunday, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani—apparently referencing the U.S. "pressure" campaign—sharply warned Trump against attempting to "incite" chaos inside of Iran.

"America should know that peace with Iran is the mother of all peace, and war with Iran is the mother of all wars," Rouhani said.

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On the second question, which I think was about the travel ban, our support for the Iranian people and their ability to exercise their rights to free speech and peaceful protest is a fundamentally separate issue from implementing 9645. As you know, it imposes visa restrictions on nationals from Iran and six other countries. Iran regularly fails to cooperate with the United States in identifying security risks. It's the source of significant terror threats, a state sponsor of terrorism. They don't – they fail to receive its nationals subject to final orders of removal from the United States.

And so the visa restrictions that we put in place were a result of the Iranian Government's failure to comply with the kind of information-sharing criteria that we look for and also the national security and the public safety risk factors. I will point out that the travel restrictions don't apply to student visas.

Pompeo, twitter

<https://tinyurl.com/y7bs7zxc>

