

White House cites India's support to sell Iran nuclear deal

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Washington: The White House has again warned that if the Republican controlled Congress kills the historic nuclear deal with Iran, it would be impossible to assemble an international coalition, including India, to back sanctions against Tehran.

The Iran deal was backed by at least 86 nations including six -- China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and Taiwan -- that have voluntarily restricted the amount of Iranian oil that they imported, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest told reporters on Thursday.

"It also happens to include all of the countries that had previously imported Iranian oil, but stopped doing it so that they could work effectively with the United States and the rest of the international community to apply pressure to Iran," he said.

It also includes a significant number of countries that may, in the future, be interested in purchasing oil from Iran, Earnest said as the Obama administration continued its efforts to sell the nuclear deal to sceptic lawmakers, including some from President Barack Obama's own Democratic party.

"So the number is significant because it serves to illustrate how difficult it would be -- basically why it would be impossible for us to re-impose sanctions if Congress were to kill this deal," he said.

Earnest said he was citing the support of all these countries "to rebut the claim that, well, if Congress is to move forward with killing this deal, that there is some other option available other than the military option".

"And the fact is, killing the deal only makes the need to use the military option more likely because it's going to be impossible for us to reassemble an international coalition to reach a diplomatic agreement," he said.

It would be impossible to do so if the US "stands alone in killing a diplomatic agreement that's supported by the rest of the world -- or at least 86 other countries around the world, including countries like China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and Taiwan", Earnest said.

It required international pressure, unanimity of opinion across the globe to convince Iran to limit its nuclear programme, he said.

"But if the United States steps away from this agreement, it certainly is fair for Iran to start calling everybody's bluff," Earnest said.

"And there's one thing we won't be able to do about it. We won't be able to apply a comprehensive international set of sanctions against Iran."

The international community was backing the deal, Earnest said, because "they know that the best way to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon is the diplomatic agreement".

If the deal is subsequently killed by the US Congress, it certainly would affect the US "and our credibility to go and tell China, India, Japan, South Korea, Turkey and Taiwan that they needed to go back to curtailing their purchases of Iranian oil".

"I think all those countries would say, Why? Why should we do that? You're not serious about trying to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, so we're not going to enter into a diplomatic agreement for that reason," Earnest said.

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