



A staff member removes the Iranian flag from the stage after a group picture with foreign ministers and representatives of the U.S., Iran, China, Russia, Britain, Germany, France and the European Union during the Iran nuclear talks at the Vienna International Center in Vienna, Austria July 14, 2015.

## Iran Prisoner Deal 'Dangerous Precedent,' Warns Ex-Secretary Pompeo

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The former US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, has warned that the latest prisoner release deal with Iran, providing billions in ransom, sets a “dangerous precedent”.

Five US citizens unlawfully held in Iran have been released on the back of a deal which has freed up at least \$6bn of funds from South Korea, but experts say the price is too high. “This will only encourage more hostage taking by the Iranian terrorists” **Pompeo said**.

During an interview with radio host John Catsimatidis, he spoke about the deal which will see billions of dollars sent to Qatar, which the US continues to assert will be used for the likes of humanitarian aid, in accordance with sanctions rules. “It’s really dangerous,” Pompeo said on “The Cats Roundtable” on 77 WABC.

“It’s dangerous for the Gulf nations, it’s dangerous for ... Israel.” Pompeo said paying for the Americans’ release will only help “build their [Iran’s] economy” and encourage more hostage-taking ... You now have a situation where we

have told the Iranians, For every American you take, the Biden administration will provide you with \$1bn," Pompeo told Catsimatidis.

### **Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo**

Richard Goldberg, a senior adviser at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and former White House National Security Council director for countering Iranian weapons of mass destruction, echoed the fears.

"President Joe Biden's decision to trade \$6 billion for five American citizens unlawfully detained in Tehran isn't just the largest hostage ransom payment in American history—it's also the second phase of an unacknowledged agreement with Tehran that strengthens the ayatollah's position in the Middle East and frees the regime to cross the nuclear weapons threshold at a time of its choosing. Americans need to brace themselves for the consequences of both realities," he **wrote** this week.

He said that what would normally be a celebratory welcome home for the Americans is now overshadowed by the methods used to win their release and the implications of a foreign policy he says is "bent on appeasing the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism".

He raised the issue that the White House announced the latest deal during the August congressional recess, accusing Biden of skirting the legislation to protect any changes being made to the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act.

"Emergency hearings cannot be held. Resolutions of disapproval cannot be fast-tracked. President Biden has successfully evaded the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act, which requires him to notify Congress of any agreement with Iran related to its nuclear program before lifting sanctions."

It is not the first time Iran has won in the hostage diplomacy stakes. In 2015, President Barack Obama agreed to pay Tehran \$1.7bn for the release of four Americans as part of the broader negotiations over the first Iran nuclear deal.

Iran took more hostages in the months and years thereafter, believing it could get an even better price from a future US president. While the Trump administration turned to pressure instead of ransoms and won the release of two hostages without paying a dollar, under Biden, ransom payments have

returned at multiple times the cost. While the Obama administration paid \$425 million per American in 2015, the Biden administration has agreed to pay \$1.2 billion. "History teaches us that Iran will only be emboldened by this swap, taking additional Americans hostage in the months and years to come," Goldberg warned.

The Biden administration has lost the trust of many, both at home and abroad. Jason Brodsky, Policy Director at United Against A Nuclear Iran, **said**: "The amount of gaslighting coming out of the US government on #Iran policy is extraordinary: officials claim sanctions are being enforced when they're not; officials deny "nuclear agreements" when there appear to be "nuclear understandings;" officials initially hid Malley's clearance being suspended; the list goes on."

**Drones are seen at a site at an undisclosed location in Iran, in this handout image obtained on April 20, 2023.**

This week, **the Financial Times claims** the latest deal is also aiming to pressure Iran to stop selling drones to Russia in its war on Ukraine, in addition to spare parts for unmanned aircraft. In what the newspaper claims is part of a broader "unwritten understanding" between Washington and Tehran to de-escalate tensions and contain a long-simmering nuclear crisis, it claims the Biden administration has raised the issue with the regime at indirect talks in Qatar and Oman this year.

However, the likelihood of this looks low, Iran and Russia deeply entrenched in military capacity building. In June, Iran International reported that the two sanctioned nations are busy building a **drone manufacturing plant in Russia** for use in Ukraine. The factory could build as many as 6,000 drones according to intelligence reports.

At the time, White House National Security Council spokesperson, John Kirby, said: "This is a full-scale defense partnership that is harmful to Ukraine, to Iran's neighbors, and to the international community. We are continuing to use all the tools at our disposal to expose and disrupt these activities including by sharing this with the public – and we are prepared to do more." The question is, at what price.