



# U.S.-Iran Ceasefire and Negotiations: Assessment and Issues for Congress

Updated May 13, 2026

An April 8 ceasefire between the United States and Iran remains in place but is on “[life support](#),” per President Donald Trump, amid intermittent fighting since May 4 that highlights the potential for a resumption of broader conflict. Moreover, Iran’s de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz and a retaliatory U.S. blockade of Iranian shipping continue, with the compounding of global economic disruptions. Limited U.S.-Iran diplomatic engagement has not, as of May 13, yielded a comprehensive agreement on the issues cited by U.S. officials at the outset of the conflict, such as Iran’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Iran and the United States may weigh each other’s ability to withstand the mounting economic costs of the current impasse when considering whether to resume conflict or seek a peace agreement. Congress may consider whether and how to support, reject, or modify Administration approaches to negotiations and any proposed changes to U.S. military operations, diplomatic agreements, sanctions, or engagement with regional partners.

## Ceasefire and U.S.-Iran Talks

On April 7, President Donald Trump [announced](#) the beginning of a two-week ceasefire. The Pakistan-brokered ceasefire came hours before President Trump’s [threatened](#) deadline to [destroy](#) Iran’s bridges and power plants. No text reflecting mutual agreement on ceasefire terms was released, and the two sides’ differing public statements on the ceasefire presaged subsequent and ongoing points of tension.

A U.S. delegation led by Vice President JD Vance met with Iranian counterparts in Islamabad on April 11-12, the senior-most diplomatic engagement between the two countries since 1979. President Trump said on [April 12](#) that “most points were agreed to, but the only point that mattered, NUCLEAR, was not,” and announced the beginning of a U.S. blockade on Iranian shipping (see below). Previous U.S.-Iran diplomatic engagements during the second Trump Administration (in [April-June 2025](#) and February 2026) stalled over disagreements over Iranian enrichment capabilities and were followed or interrupted by U.S. and Israeli military action against Iran. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on May 5 that negotiations were addressing both Iran’s enrichment capabilities as well as its enriched material, a potential [target](#) of a possible future U.S. military operation according to media accounts. While Israel is reportedly not

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

IN12678

directly involved in U.S.-Iran diplomacy, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [has said](#) “the most important objective is the removal of all enriched material from Iran and the dismantling of Iran’s enrichment capabilities.”

U.S. and Iranian officials have not met since April 12 but have reportedly continued to exchange draft proposals. President Trump wrote on May 5 that “Great Progress has been made toward a Complete and Final Agreement” with Iran. President Trump rejected a subsequent proposal from Iran on May 10, calling it “[TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE](#).”

## Ongoing Confrontation at Sea: U.S. Blockade and Project Freedom

Iran’s disruption of commercial shipping (via threatened and executed attacks) has reduced transit through the [Strait of Hormuz](#), a crucial conduit for energy resources and [other commodities](#) to reach global markets.

In announcing the ceasefire, President Trump [wrote](#) that the cessation of U.S. military action was “subject to ... Iran agreeing to the COMPLETE, IMMEDIATE, and SAFE OPENING of the Strait of Hormuz.” Maritime traffic through the Strait has remained [well below](#) pre-conflict levels as Iran has sought to [formalize](#) its de facto control over the Strait, including a tiered system of payments that Iran [reportedly](#) has charged some vessels.

The day after the evident failure of U.S.-Iran talks in Islamabad, the United States began imposing a “[blockade](#) of all maritime traffic entering and exiting Iranian ports.” CENTCOM [reports](#) having redirected 67 commercial vessels and “disabled” 4 Iranian-flagged ships attempting to cross the U.S. blockade line, while allowing 15 “supporting humanitarian aid to pass.”

On May 3, President Trump [announced](#) that U.S. forces would launch “Project Freedom,” an effort to help commercial ships transit the Strait. Perhaps in response to Project Freedom, Iran conducted what appear to be its first attacks since the ceasefire on [May 4](#), striking targets in the UAE, with additional attacks in subsequent days. On May 5, President Trump [wrote](#) that Project Freedom would be “paused” due to requests from “Pakistan and other Countries” and progress toward a U.S.-Iran agreement. U.S. and Iranian forces traded fire on [May 7](#) as U.S. military vessels transited out through the Strait.

## Assessment

As of mid-May 2026, the United States and Iran might approach diplomatic negotiations with the following considerations:

- The extent to which the U.S. blockade or resumed military attacks (by the United States, Israel, and/or Arab Gulf states) may [reduce](#) Iran’s oil exports, put Iran’s oil [infrastructure](#) at risk, or exacerbate Iran’s acute [economic crisis](#).
- U.S. officials’ evaluation of the potential global economic impact of the Strait’s prolonged closure or renewed Iranian attacks on Gulf infrastructure.

## Issues for Congress

Possible issues on which Members of Congress could engage include

- **War powers.** On [May 1](#), the [White House asserted](#) that “hostilities that began on February 28, 2026, have terminated.” Some Members of Congress continue to introduce

- measures under the War Powers Resolution (P.L. 93-148) to end hostilities with Iran and assert the need for congressional approval. The House and Senate have collectively rejected nine such measures since early March 2026.
- **Sanctions.** President Trump [wrote](#) on April 8 that “We are, and will be, talking Tariff and Sanctions relief with Iran.” Members could seek to block or support sanctions relief, including via measures to condition or mandate congressional review of executive branch actions related to sanctions on Iran (H.R. 2012, H.R. 2570).
- **Supplemental appropriations.** Acting Pentagon Comptroller Jules W. Hurst III testified on [May 12](#) that “our operational cost estimate” of \$29 billion does not include damage to [U.S. installations](#); in [testimony](#) two weeks earlier, he said that a supplemental appropriations request “will come to Congress once we have a full assessment of the cost of the conflict.”
- **Oversight.** Any agreement “relating to the nuclear program of Iran” would trigger congressional review requirements under the 2015 Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (P.L. 114-17). More broadly, Members may engage with the Administration regarding the conduct of the conflict and its ramifications for Iran; for U.S. cooperation with Israel and other Middle East partners; for the U.S. and global economies; and for U.S. military readiness, tactics, and strategies.

## Author Information

Clayton Thomas, Coordinator  
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

Jim Zanotti  
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

Christopher M. Blanchard  
Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs

---

## Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS’s institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.