
US–Iran Negotiations Progress Amid Blockade Pressure



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WASHINGTON, April 16: Talks between the United States and Iran over a potential new round of face-to-face negotiations are continuing, the White House said on Tuesday, even as Washington enforces a full maritime blockade on Iranian ports and regional diplomatic activity accelerates across West Asia.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said US participation in further talks depends on reopening key maritime corridors “with no limitations or delays.” She indicated that the next round of negotiations is likely to be held in Islamabad, Pakistan, while rejecting reports that Washington has formally requested an extension of the current ceasefire, stating that both sides remain engaged in ongoing dialogue.

US officials cited in media reports said Tuesday’s discussions showed progress toward a possible framework agreement to end the conflict, with negotiators maintaining backchannel communication involving multiple regional stakeholders. While optimism has grown over narrowing gaps, officials acknowledged that internal divisions within Iran continue to pose a significant hurdle to a final deal.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has intensified its shuttle diplomacy to bridge differences between Washington and Tehran. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif began a four-day regional tour including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Türkiye, while Pakistan’s Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir led a delegation to Tehran, where Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi received him for high-level discussions.

According to Iran’s semi-official Tasnim news agency, Tehran will evaluate the outcome of its talks with the Pakistani delegation before deciding on participation in another round of US

negotiations. Iranian sources also suggested that developments related to the Lebanon ceasefire could influence Tehran's decision-making process, while emphasizing that Washington must avoid "excessive demands" and honor previous commitments.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said uncertainty remains over any extension of the ceasefire, citing what he described as inconsistent US positions.

On the security front, the US military said it has halted maritime trade to and from Iran within 36 hours of implementing its blockade, though maritime monitoring reports indicate that Iranian oil exports continue through sanctioned shipping activity.

International actors, including Russia and Saudi Arabia, have called for continued diplomatic engagement under Pakistan's mediation, while Moscow also signaled openness to revisiting proposals involving Iran's enriched uranium.

Despite intensified diplomacy and partial progress, major disagreements remain, and the path toward a comprehensive agreement is still uncertain.