



Maxar Technologies

The oil tanker Front Altair off the coast of Fujairah, United Arab Emirates on Monday.

Pentagon sending more American troops to Mideast as tensions mount

By **NASSER KARIMI** and **JON GAMBRELL**
Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran will surpass the uranium-stockpile limit set by its nuclear deal in the next 10 days, an official said Monday, raising pressure on Europeans trying to save the accord a year after the U.S. withdrawal lit the fuse for the heightened tensions now between Tehran and Washington.

Hours later, the Pentagon announced it was sending about 1,000 additional American troops to the Middle East to bolster security in the region in the face of what U.S. officials said is a growing threat from Iran.

The announcement by Iran's nuclear agency marked yet another deadline set by Tehran. President Hassan Rouhani already has warned Europe that a new deal needs to be in place by July 7 or the Islamic Republic would increase its enrichment of uranium.

Atomic energy spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi suggested that Iran's enrichment could reach up to 20%, just a step away from weapons-grade levels.

It appears as if Iran has begun its own maximum pressure campaign on the world after facing one from President Donald Trump's administration that deeply cut into its sale of crude oil abroad and sent its economy into freefall. Europe has so far been unable to offer

Iran a way around the U.S. sanctions.

The development follows apparent attacks last week in the Strait of Hormuz on oil tankers, assaults that Washington has blamed on Iran. While Iran has denied being involved, it laid mines in the 1980s targeting oil tankers around the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world's crude oil passes.

"If this condition continues, there will be no deal" anymore, Kamalvandi said. He accused the Europeans of "killing time" as the clock runs down.

Rouhani, greeting France's new ambassador to Tehran on Monday, similarly warned that time was running out on the deal.

"The current situation is very critical and France and the other parties to the (deal) still have a very limited opportunity to play their historic role for saving the deal," Rouhani said, according to his website.

The Iranian announcement appeared timed to strike just as European foreign ministers met in Luxembourg. Federica Mogherini, the European Union's top diplomat, declined to specifically address the Iranian announcement.

"At the moment, as of today, Iran is still technically compliant and we strongly hope, encourage and expect that Iran continues to comply," Mogherini told journalists. She insisted she would await the next

report on the issue from the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Under terms of the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Iran can keep a stockpile of no more than 660 pounds of low-enriched uranium. Kamalvandi said that given Iran's recent decision to quadruple its production of low-enriched uranium, it would pass the limit on Thursday, June 27.

The Vienna-based IAEA said last month that Iran remained within its stockpile limits and declined to comment on Iran's announcement. Kamalvandi said Iran would continue to allow the U.N. to inspect its nuclear facilities for the time being.

He also raised the specter of increasing its enrichment levels, saying Iran needs 5% enriched uranium for its nuclear power plant in southern Iranian port of Bushehr and 20% enriched fuel for its Tehran research reactor.

The nuclear deal limits Iran to enriching uranium only to 3.67%, enough for power plants and other peaceful purposes.

But after America pulled out of the nuclear accord and escalated sanctions, Rouhani set a July 7 deadline for Europe to come up with better terms for the deal or Tehran would boost enrichment further. So far, a European mechanism called INSTEX to protect trade with Iran has yet to take off.

Trump campaign fires pollsters after mixed messaging leaks

By **ZEKE MILLER** and **JILL COLVIN**
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When President Donald Trump's internal polling suggested he was trailing Democrats in crucial states earlier this year, it did what any campaign would do: tried to bury the bad numbers.

When the findings leaked to the media anyway, an infuriated Trump and his aides first disputed the poll's existence, then tried to dismiss its importance before finally firing some of the pollsters.

The deception and muddled messaging are part reflexive: Trump and his team have made a habit of discounting embarrassing news as "fake." But the internal drama on the brink of Trump's formal reelection launch could also signal trouble ahead if staffers are skittish about being candid with a boss who has made "winning" a central part of his brand.

"All news about the president's polling is completely false," campaign manager Brad Parscale said in a statement. "The president's new polling is extraordinary and his numbers have never been better."

The episode was also a sobering reminder that for all the Trump campaign's efforts to professionalize

its operation, much hasn't changed. Despite its new fundraising prowess and growing staff working from a gleaming tower overlooking the Potomac River, the reelection campaign is likely to feature the same leaks, backbiting and high turnover as Trump's ramshackle 2016 effort and early White House tenure.

Indeed, the decision to oust Brett Loyd, the pollster now running White House counselor Kellyanne Conway's former polling firm, was seen by some as less about stamping leaks than a slap at Conway, whose close relationship with the president has inspired lingering jealousy.

Also getting the boot were pollsters Adam Geller and Michael Baselice, according to a person familiar with the decision who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal campaign matters. Pollsters Tony Fabrizio and John McLaughlin will remain with the campaign.

It remains unclear whether the president was briefed on any aspect of the poll before it became public, but two people familiar with the situation said he had not signed off on it beforehand and learned about its findings and price tag from the media.

Being the bearer of bad news is never a favored position in Trump World. And some Trump aides and allies

have privately expressed frustration that demoralizing news was not being widely shared internally or with the candidate, believing that it was depriving the president, who is his own chief strategist, of crucial information needed to make important strategic decisions.

Trump demands loyalty from his staffers and grows especially angry when he learns information — especially negative news — from the media.

The campaign's response to the polling flap was scattershot. Officials first denied the existence of the poll. Then ABC News reported on the numbers, which showed Trump losing to Democratic front-runner Joe Biden in several key battleground states, including Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida.

In response to the story, Parscale admitted the numbers were accurate but tried to discount them, insisting they were outdated and flawed because they came before the release of the summary of special counsel Robert Mueller's report and before Democrats made their cases.

He pointed to a new, private survey he said showed "huge swings in the president's favor across the 17 states we have polled, based on the policies now espoused by the Democrats." The campaign has not released those results.

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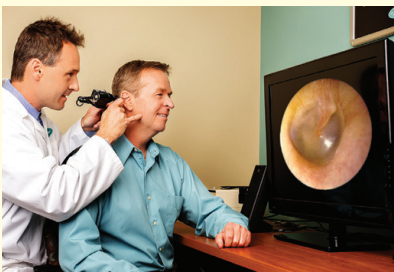
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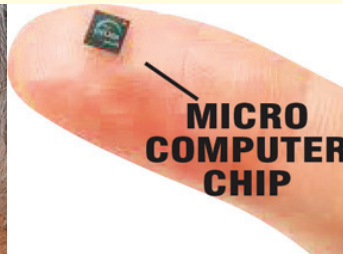
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