

GOP tries to undercut nuclear deal with warning to Iran

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers warned the leaders of Iran on Monday that any nuclear deal they cut with President Barack Obama could expire the day he leaves office. The White House denounced the GOP's latest effort to undercut the international negotiations as a "rush to war."

Monday's open letter from 47 GOP senators marked an unusually public and aggressive attempt to undermine Obama and five world powers as negotiators try to strike an initial deal by the end of March to limit Iran's nuclear programs.

Republicans say a deal would be insufficient and unenforceable, and they have made a series of proposals to undercut or block it — from requiring Senate say-so on any agreement to ordering new penalty sanctions against Iran or even making a

pre-emptive declaration of war.

Obama, noting that some in Iran also want no part of any deal, said: "I think it's somewhat ironic that some members of Congress want to make common cause with the hardliners in Iran. It's an unusual coalition."

The letter was written by freshman Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas, who opposes negotiations with Iran. It's addressed to the "Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran" and presents itself as a constitutional primer to the government of an American adversary. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky's signature is on it, as are those of several prospective presidential candidates.

Explaining the difference between a Senate-ratified treaty and a mere agreement between Obama

and Iran's Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the senators warned, "The next president could revoke such an executive agreement with the stroke of a pen, and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time."

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif responded via state media, dismissing the letter as a "propaganda ploy" and noting that many international deals are "mere executive agreements." He suggested the senators were undermining not only the prospective deal with Iran but other international agreements as well.

With Cotton presiding over the Senate on Monday, Democratic leader Harry Reid spoke out, saying Republicans were driven by animosity toward Obama and unwilling to recognize that American vot-

ers had twice elected him president.

"Let's be very clear: Republicans are undermining our commander-in-chief while empowering the ayatollahs," Reid said.

"Republicans don't know how to do anything other than juvenile political attacks against the president," the 75-year-old Reid said with the 37-year-old Cotton listening.

The Republicans' move to stop a nuclear deal with Iran comes just days after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to a joint meeting of Congress at Republican House Speaker John Boehner's invitation. In his address, Netanyahu bluntly warned the United States that a deal would pave Iran's path to a nuclear bomb.

The White House denounced Cotton's letter, saying it was part of an ongoing partisan strategy to

undermine the president's ability to conduct foreign policy.

Vice President Joe Biden released a statement saying, "In thirty-six years in the United States Senate, I cannot recall another instance in which senators wrote directly to advise another country — much less a longtime foreign adversary — that the president does not have the constitutional authority to reach a meaningful understanding with them."

Biden added, "The decision to undercut our president and circumvent our constitutional system offends me as a matter of principle."

Press secretary Josh Earnest said "the rush to war, or at least the rush to the military option, that many Republicans are advocating is not at all in the best interest of the United States."



The Rivoli Restoration Coalition is entering the first phase of the restoration project the restore the old theater on Main Street in Pendleton.

RIVOLI: According to plan, will reopen in 2020

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To further bolster the festival, Kindle said the coalition will start a Kickstarter campaign to crowdfund the event in the coming weeks.

If the coalition isn't able to meet their goal, Kindle said the festival will be pared down, although he expressed confidence that the Kickstarter would succeed.

While initially meant as a way to garner financial and public support for the Rivoli restoration, Picken said the festival is intended to become an annual event, with the Rivoli becoming the central venue once restoration is complete.

According to the comprehensive plan, the Rivoli will reopen as a multipurpose performing arts center in 2020,

a timeline that Picken called "ambitious."

Picken said the coalition is no longer working in hypothetical scenarios, with major questions now involving when the Rivoli will open and what it will look like.

Despite the ambitious timeline and no concerns over the foundation of the building, Picken said keeping the structural integrity intact will be a

key point of the restoration.

"If it takes a little longer ... then that's what we're going to do," he said.

With the Rivoli fast approaching the century mark, Picken said he wanted the theater to stand for "another 100 years."

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TRIBES: Must ensure jury pools include non-Indians

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continue to assault our women, we will prosecute and put them in jail."

A 1978 U.S. Supreme Court ruling stripped tribes of any criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians on their reservations. But the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013 allowed tribes to charge non-Indians who are married to or in a partnership with a tribal member for domestic violence crimes and violations of protection orders. The Justice Department has said that American Indian women suffer from domestic violence at rates more than double national averages.

Critics say the tribes' increased authority is sure to be challenged in federal courts.

To ease concerns from some members of Congress, tribes have to ensure that jury pools include non-Indians and that their court systems afford defendants the same rights as state and federal

courts do. The changes to the Violence Against Women Act also allow defendants to seek review of a tribal court decision in federal court.

In addition to the CTU-IR, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in southern Arizona and the Tulalip Tribes in Washington state were approved as part of the pilot project in February 2014.

Brent Leonhard, an attorney in the Office of Legal Counsel for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, said prosecution has gone up and more people are willing to report crimes. In the past year, his office has filed four cases with three ending in guilty pleas.

"That is double the highest rate ever prosecuted by the feds out of Umatilla," Leonhard said.

Federal authorities have jurisdiction over major crimes like homicide and assault resulting in serious bodily injury on reservations when the victim, suspect, or

both, is American Indian. But not all domestic violence on reservations rises to the level of a federal crime.

Tribes have civil authority over non-Indians but often are reluctant to go forward with a case when the penalty amounts to a fine and offenders have little incentive to pay.

Alfred Urbina, attorney general for the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, wants Congress to expand the number of crimes covered, revise the definition of domestic violence and extend prosecutorial authority to protect children. But some tribes might not have the financial resources to enforce prosecution of all crimes.

"It is bittersweet, because we know that women will still be suffering and there will simply be no recourse in some places," Urbina said.

"The tribes who choose to implement despite the challenges will strain their budgets."

Justice Department spokesman Wyn Hornbuckle-

le said the department will continue to collaborate with tribal prosecutors and law enforcement through training and consultation.

"Together we will work to end the scourge of violence against women in Indian country, and this day marks a significant step forward," Hornbuckle said.

BRIEFLY

40 hurt in Amtrak train, tractor-trailer collision

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Transportation officials say 40 passengers were injured when an Amtrak train collided with a tractor-trailer that was stuck on the tracks in North Carolina.

DOT officials said 25 people were taken to Halifax Regional Medical Center by bus and 15 by ambulance after the collision, which happened about noon Monday.

They said none of the injuries appeared to be life-threatening. A bus will take another 173 passengers who weren't injured to Richmond, Virginia.

Halifax County law-enforcement officials say the collision toppled the engine onto its side. They say the first two cars of the train toppled after the crash.

Gun ownership and hunting at record lows

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans who live in a household with at least one gun is lower than it's ever been, according to a major American trend survey that finds the decline in gun ownership is paralleled by a reduction in the number of Americans who hunt.

According to the latest General Social Survey, 32 percent of Americans either own a firearm themselves or live with someone who does, which ties a record low set in 2010. That's a significant decline since the late 1970s and early 1980s, when about half of Americans told researchers there was a gun in their household.

The General Social

Survey is conducted by NORC, an independent research organization based at the University of Chicago, with money from the National Science Foundation. Because of its long-running and comprehensive set of questions about the demographics, behaviors and attitudes of the American public, it is a highly regarded source of data about social trends.

The drop in the number of Americans who own a gun or live in a household with one is probably linked to a decline in the popularity of hunting, from 32 percent who said they lived in a household with at least one hunter in 1977 to less than half that number saying so now.

U of Oklahoma severs ties with fraternity after racist chant

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — The president of the University of Oklahoma severed the school's ties with a national fraternity on Monday and ordered that its on-campus house be shuttered after several members took part in a racist chant caught on video.

President David Boren said he was sickened and couldn't eat or sleep after learning about the video Sunday afternoon. The video, which was posted online, shows several people on a bus participating in a chant that included a racial slur, referenced lynching and indicated black students would never be admitted to OU's chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

"This is not who we are," Boren said at a midday news conference. "I'd be glad if they left. I might even pay the bus fare for them."

HOMEBUYERS: Boardman recently approved bond for new recreation center

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their grant for up to 90 days.

Boardman City Manager Karen Pettigrew, who also serves as treasurer for the community development association, said the city is slowly but surely becoming more livable. Two new subdivisions are under construction through Riverwood Homes of Boise, and the city recently approved a bond for a new recreation center.

The grants will help invite people to put down roots in town, Pettigrew said.

"For some time now, workforce housing has been a priority here in Boardman," she said. "I just keep saying if you get to know us,

you'll love us."

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