

THE IRAN DEAL COMPARISON

The 2015 Nuclear Agreement vs. The 2026 Memorandum of Understanding

Fraser for Congress | MO District 3 | August 4, 2026 Primary

PURPOSE: This document places the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the 2026 Memorandum of Understanding side by side on every major dimension. The MOU was signed June 18, 2026 at the Palace of Versailles. Republican senators — including the administration's closest Senate ally — are on record saying the new deal is worse than the one it replaced.

CRITICAL CONTEXT: Secretary of State Marco Rubio co-justified the February 28, 2026 war, was central to Iran negotiations for months, and called the intelligence showing Iran's nuclear program was only 'set back a few months' after the 2025 strikes a 'false story that really shouldn't be re-reported.' He was then notably absent when the MOU was announced — Axios reported that Rubio, along with SecDef Hegseth and CIA Director Ratcliffe, was skeptical the deal was good based on the latest intelligence. Congress is now specifically demanding Rubio brief them under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. He owns the contradictions that led to the war. He now must answer for the deal that ended it.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

DIMENSION	2015 NUCLEAR AGREEMENT (JCPOA)	2026 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU — Versailles)
What it is	109-page detailed agreement. Finished, comprehensive document with <u>binding terms, specific benchmarks, and verification mechanisms</u> . Negotiated over 2 years <u>with 6 world powers</u> : U.S., UK, France, Germany, Russia, China, and EU. <u>Submitted to Congress</u> under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA) for a 60-day review window.	14-point Memorandum of Understanding. A framework — not a final deal. 60-day window to negotiate the actual terms. <u>Signed bilaterally between the U.S. and Iran</u> , with Pakistan as mediator. Signed at a G7 dinner. <u>Congress was not briefed</u> before signing. Negotiated by Envoy Steve Witkoff and V.P. JD Vance in the final weeks, after Secretary of State Marco Rubio was sidelined from the final negotiations.

DIMENSION	2015 NUCLEAR AGREEMENT (JCPOA)	2026 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU — Versailles)
Nuclear enrichment limits	BINDING AND SPECIFIC: Enrichment capped at 3.67% purity (well below weapons-grade 90%). <u>Stockpile reduced by 96%</u> — from ~10,000 kg to 300 kg. <u>Two-thirds of centrifuges removed</u> . Fordow facility converted to non-enrichment use. Arak heavy water reactor redesigned to eliminate the plutonium path to a bomb.	NO BINDING LIMITS: Paragraph 8 states Iran 'reaffirms that it shall not procure or develop nuclear weapons' — a restatement of Iran's existing NPT obligation, made before the 2015 agreement as well. <u>Enrichment levels</u> , centrifuge numbers, and stockpile amounts <u>are not addressed</u> . The MOU defers all nuclear terms to a 60-day final deal negotiation. The stated primary justification for the war — preventing enrichment — remains unresolved.
Inspections / Verification	IAEA <u>inspectors given continuous monitoring access</u> . Supply chain inspections of uranium mines and mills for 25 years. Access to declared sites within 24 hours. Dispute mechanism for suspected undeclared sites. Iran's commitment to the Additional Protocol of the NPT — stricter inspection standards — was required.	<u>No inspection provisions in the MOU</u> . Paragraph 8 references IAEA supervision only for stockpile down-blending. Paragraph 12 calls for an unspecified 'executive mechanism' to monitor implementation. No details on IAEA access, frequency, or scope. <u>Note: Iran has already refused IAEA inspections of its damaged nuclear sites since the June 2025 strikes.</u>
Sanctions relief — Amount	Access to approximately \$50-100 billion in <u>frozen Iranian assets</u> — estimates varied. Phased relief upon IAEA verification that Iran had implemented nuclear steps. Sanctions hawks at the time called it 'pallets of cash.' Secretary Rubio — who co-justified the 2026 war partly to stop the flow of money to Iran — called the 2015 deal's economic benefits a funding mechanism for Iran's military buildup.	Paragraph 10: Immediate U.S. Treasury <u>waivers for Iranian oil exports</u> — effective upon signing, before any nuclear steps. Paragraph 11: <u>ALL frozen Iranian assets released</u> 'fully available for use' upon implementation. Paragraph 7: U.S. commits to <u>terminate ALL sanctions</u> including UN Security Council resolutions and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions. Paragraph 6: U.S. additionally commits to develop a ' <u>\$300 BILLION</u> reconstruction and economic development plan' for Iran — <u>no congressional vote</u> .
Sanctions relief — Conditions	PHASED. Iran had to verifiably implement nuclear steps FIRST. IAEA had to confirm compliance before any relief took effect on Implementation Day. 'Snapback' mechanism: UN sanctions could be <u>re-imposed automatically</u> if Iran violated terms without requiring a new vote.	IMMEDIATE. Paragraph 10 oil export waivers begin 'immediately upon signing.' Paragraph 11 asset release begins 'upon the implementation of this MoU.' Paragraph 13: <u>Nuclear negotiations begin only AFTER</u> sanctions relief starts. The sequencing is reversed from the 2015 agreement — money flows before nuclear commitments are resolved.

DIMENSION	2015 NUCLEAR AGREEMENT (JCPOA)	2026 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU — Versailles)
What the deal cost	\$1.7 billion in <u>proceeds from a 1981 frozen Iranian arms sale</u> — a separate legal settlement. No reconstruction commitment. No additional payments beyond sanctions relief that <u>Iran was already owed</u> under the legal settlement.	Paragraph 6: A commitment to develop a plan 'with at least USD 300 Billion for the reconstruction and economic development of the Islamic Republic of Iran.' Additionally: <u>\$65+ billion in estimated war costs</u> . Six U.S. service members <u>killed</u> . 102-day Strait of Hormuz closure — the <u>most significant oil supply disruption</u> in recorded history. Secretary Rubio stated in March 2026 the war would be over 'within weeks, not months.' It lasted 107 days.
Missiles / proxies	Not included — a deliberate decision that the 2015 negotiators calculated was necessary to achieve any deal at all. Critics, including Secretary Rubio at the time he joined the Senate, cited this as a major flaw and helped justify withdrawing in 2018.	Also not included. Sec. Rubio and V.P. Vance had both cited Iran's missiles as a justification for <u>starting the war</u> on February 28, 2026. Iranian state media explicitly confirmed that 'missiles and resistance groups' <u>are off the agenda</u> . The <u>same gap Rubio used</u> to criticize the 2015 deal is present in the 2026 deal he helped negotiate.
Congressional role	Submitted under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act (INARA) — the law Sen. Rubio supported as a senator — giving Congress 60 days to review. Congress voted. <u>The deal survived a disapproval vote</u> .	<u>No congressional vote</u> . No Senate ratification. Signed as an executive agreement. Sen. Kaine (who authored INARA): the MOU 'probably touches enough on the nuclear program that it would have to be submitted to Congress.' Congress is now formally demanding Sec. Rubio brief them under INARA — the same law that was used to review the 2015 agreement. <u>Sen. Lankford (R-OK): 'If you want a deal to last, it can't be an executive agreement. We've got to have a vote of Congress.'</u>
UN Security Council	Core UNSC provisions <u>on sensitive technology transfer</u> re-established by a new Security Council resolution endorsing the agreement. International framework maintained. Multiple world powers co-signed.	Paragraph 7: U.S. commits <u>to terminate</u> 'United Nations Security Council resolutions' against Iran — not just U.S. sanctions, but international ones requiring multilateral agreement. No Senate ratification. The Treaty Clause (Article II, Section 2, Clause 2) question: commitments of this magnitude typically require Senate advice and consent. <u>No vote planned</u> .

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Rubio's Stated Position Before the Deal	Rubio called the 2025 intelligence report <u>showing Iran's nuclear program was set back only 'a few months'</u> by the June 2025 strikes <u>'a false story that really shouldn't be re-reported.'</u> He co-justified the February 28, 2026 war partly on the grounds that Iran's nuclear program posed an imminent threat and that Iran was using missiles 'to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions.'	Rubio was 'central to the Iran negotiations' in the lead-up to the MOU — then was sidelined in the final weeks when Vance, Witkoff, and Kushner rushed to close the deal. Axios reported Rubio was skeptical the deal was good based on the latest intelligence. He was notably absent from public defense of the MOU. Fox News' Brian Kilmeade and Marc Thiessen took to calling it 'JD Vance's deal.' Congress is now formally demanding Rubio answer for it under INARA.
Cost without a war	JCPOA was negotiated <u>without a war</u> . 0 American service members killed to get the deal. The Strait of Hormuz remained open throughout. No economic disruption. \$0 in military costs.	107-day war to arrive at a deal that Republican senators call 'JCPOA-plus' — meaning Iran <u>received MORE concessions</u> than under the 2015 agreement. Sen. Cassidy (R-LA): 'It's kind of JCPOA-plus... <u>it's going to leave Iran stronger.</u> ' Sen. Wicker (R-MS): The <u>MOU 'would make Iran's payoff under the 2015 deal look like a pittance by comparison.'</u> The NewsNation analysis: 'Both deals involve a written commitment by Iran never to seek a nuclear weapon' — the same core commitment. The Squirrels foreign policy analysis: 'No military operations. Negotiated without a war. Sanctions relief and asset release. ~\$100 billion in frozen assets (phased).'

SECRETARY RUBIO'S DOCUMENTED RECORD — FROM WAR TO SILENCE

Marco Rubio is the Secretary of State. He co-justified the war. He called the intelligence contradicting the war's justification a 'false story.' He was central to negotiations. Then went silent when the deal was announced. Now Congress demands he answer for it under the law.

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DATE	DOCUMENTED FACT / PRIMARY SOURCE
June 22, 2025	Rubio calls a Politico intelligence report showing Iran's nuclear program was only 'set back a few months' by the 2025 strikes a 'false story that really shouldn't be re-reported.' — directly contradicted by the Pentagon's own classified assessment that Iran's program was set back two years, and by a leaked Defense Intelligence Agency report finding sites were damaged but not destroyed and the program delayed only months. Sources: NBC News; FactCheck.org; TIME, March 18, 2026.
February 28, 2026	Co-justifies the Iran war. States Iran was building 'powerful missiles and drones to create a conventional shield for their nuclear blackmail ambitions.' Cited as one of the official justifications for launching hostilities.
March 3, 2026	Tells reporters the U.S. pre-empted an Iranian counterstrike against Israel: 'We were not going to sit there and absorb a blow before we responded.' — One of 10 shifting justifications for the war documented in the Congressional Research Service report.
March 27–31, 2026	States the war will be over 'within weeks, not months.' Tells Al Jazeera Iran 'must take concrete steps to abandon any ambition to acquire nuclear weapons.' War lasted 107 days.
May 2026	Was 'central to the Iran negotiations' per multiple news organizations. Led diplomacy effort with Iran through multiple rounds of talks.
June 15–17, 2026	Sidelined from final negotiations. Vance, Witkoff, and Kushner rush to close the deal. Axios reports Rubio, Hegseth, and CIA Director Ratcliffe were all skeptical the deal was good based on latest intelligence.
June 18, 2026	MOU signed at Versailles. Rubio is notably absent from public defense. Fox News hosts call it 'JD Vance's deal.' Rubio says nothing publicly about the document he spent months negotiating.
June 17, 2026	House Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, and Intelligence committee Democrats send a 3-page letter formally demanding Rubio brief Congress on the MOU under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act — the same law governing the 2015 agreement.

REPUBLICANS WHO SAID IT — THE NEW DEAL IS WORSE THAN THE OLD ONE

Named, dated, sourced statements from Republican senators comparing the 2026 MOU unfavorably to the agreement it replaced.

REPUBLICAN / JUDGE	QUOTE	SOURCE / DATE
Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)	<i>"This is the worst foreign policy blunder in decades. It's kind of JCPOA-plus [meaning Iran gets more than it got in 2015]. It's going to leave Iran stronger, and it's going to leave our allies weaker, and it may commit U.S. taxpayer dollars."</i>	MS NOW / The Hill, June 17–18, 2026
Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS)	<i>"The MOU would make Iran's payoff under the 2015 deal look like a pittance by comparison."</i>	The Hill, June 17, 2026

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REPUBLICAN / JUDGE	QUOTE	SOURCE / DATE
Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA)	<i>"They're going to have to come explain this because we did have very serious problems with the JCPOA. I don't want to see JCPOA 2.0."</i>	NewsNation / The Hill, June 19, 2026
Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) — administration's closest Senate ally	<i>"If they can enrich uranium anywhere at all, then it's the same as JCPOA. The MOU being described by us sounds really very good; the MOU being described by Iran sounds awful."</i>	Politico / New Republic, June 16, 2026
Sen. James Lankford (R-OK)	<i>"If you want a deal to last, it can't be an executive agreement. We've got to have a vote of Congress to be able to solidify it long term."</i>	MS NOW, June 17, 2026
Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX)	<i>"They'll try to write it around the treaty requirements, so I don't expect we'll vote on it."</i>	MS NOW, June 17, 2026
NewsNation comparative analysis	<i>"Both deals involve a written commitment by Iran never to seek a nuclear weapon. [The administration] has insisted, incorrectly, that Tehran had never done so before [the 2026 war]."</i>	NewsNation, June 19, 2026
The Squirrels foreign policy analysis	<i>"The same gap that was used to justify withdrawing from the 2015 agreement in 2018 exists in the deal signed in 2026. The issue that was the stated reason for leaving the first deal is absent from the second. No military operations. Negotiated without a war."</i>	TheSquirrels.in, June 2026

The 2015 agreement was abandoned in 2018. A war launched in 2026 to destroy what it protected. Secretary Rubio called the intelligence contradicting that war's justification a 'false story.' The deal that ended the war — which Rubio helped negotiate, then went silent about — is what his own Senate colleagues call 'JCPOA-plus' — meaning Iran gets more from this deal than it got from the 2015 agreement. Without the binding nuclear limits. Without the inspections. After \$65 billion and six American lives.

REPRESENTATIVE ONDER'S DOCUMENTED RECORD

ONDERSEARCH: Representative Onder voted NAY on all three War Powers resolutions (RC 85 March 5, RC 114 April 16, RC 199 June 3, 2026). He was not among the four Republicans who crossed party lines. A search of onder.house.gov as of June 1, 2026 found zero statements from Representative Onder on the Iran war, the MOU, the JCPOA comparison, the \$300 billion reconstruction commitment, the Treaty Clause constitutional question, or the congressional oversight issues the MOU raises. Sources: clerk.house.gov; onder.house.gov.

Congress is specifically demanding Secretary Rubio brief them under the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act. The Treaty Clause (Article II, Section 2, Clause 2) raises questions about whether commitments of this magnitude require Senate ratification. Article I, Section 8, Clause 11 gives Congress alone the power to declare war.

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Representative Oander, who sits on the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government, voted three times to let the war continue without authorization — and has said nothing publicly about any of it.

PRIMARY SOURCES

The 2026 MOU

- NPR — Full text: [npr.org/2026/06/18/nx-s1-5863027/us-iran-trump-memorandum-of-understanding-full-text](https://www.npr.org/2026/06/18/nx-s1-5863027/us-iran-trump-memorandum-of-understanding-full-text)
- CNBC: [cnbc.com/2026/06/17/trump-vance-iran-deal-nuclear-g7.html](https://www.cnbc.com/2026/06/17/trump-vance-iran-deal-nuclear-g7.html)

The 2015 JCPOA

- Britannica: [britannica.com/event/Joint-Comprehensive-Plan-of-Action](https://www.britannica.com/event/Joint-Comprehensive-Plan-of-Action)
- Center for Arms Control: armscontrolcenter.org/the-iran-deal-then-and-now/
- RAND: rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/05/the-revenge-of-the-jcpoa.html

Comparison Analysis

- NewsNation: [newsnationnow.com/politics/trump-obama-iran-deals/amp/](https://www.newsnationnow.com/politics/trump-obama-iran-deals/amp/)
- The Squirrels: thesquirrels.in/global-economy-trade/obama-jcpoa-vs-trump-2026-iran-deal-comparison-12043564
- CS Monitor: [csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2026/0423/iran-war-trump-obama-jcpoa-nuclear-deal](https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Foreign-Policy/2026/0423/iran-war-trump-obama-jcpoa-nuclear-deal)

Secretary Rubio's Record

- Rubio 'false story': The Mirror / AOL — aol.com/articles/white-house-claims-iran-nuclear-153028027.html
- Rubio war justification March 3, 2026: NBC News — [nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/nuclear-program-missiles-regime-change](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/nuclear-program-missiles-regime-change)
- Rubio 'within weeks': Reuters — aol.com/articles/rubio-says-us-achieve-iran-175017282.html
- Rubio sidelined / skeptical: Axios — [axios.com/2026/06/17/iran-deal-us-trump-rubio-democrats-congress-war](https://www.axios.com/2026/06/17/iran-deal-us-trump-rubio-democrats-congress-war)
- Rubio absent from deal defense: Mediaite — [mediaite.com/opinion/rubios-two-day-absence-secretarys-media-silence-is-a-flashing-red-sign-trumps-iran-deal-stinks/](https://www.mediaite.com/opinion/rubios-two-day-absence-secretarys-media-silence-is-a-flashing-red-sign-trumps-iran-deal-stinks/)
- Congress demands Rubio brief under INARA: democrats-armedservices.house.gov (letter to Sec. Rubio, June 17, 2026)

Republican Statements on the MOU

- The Hill — Cassidy/Wicker/Ernst: thehill.com/homenews/senate/5929430-trump-iran-deal-republican-backlash/
- The Hill — Ernst 'JCPOA 2.0': thehill.com/homenews/senate/5931086-republican-senator-iran-agreement-concerns/

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- New Republic — Graham: newrepublic.com/post/211918/donald-trump-iran-deal-briefing-republicans
- MS NOW — Lankford, Cornyn: ms.now/news/senate-republicans-skeptical-trump-iran-deal
- Fox News — 'Giving a lot more to get a lot less': foxnews.com/politics/trumps-iran-deal-giving-lot-more-get-lot-less-than-obamas-senator-says

Onder Voting Record

- RC 85 (March 5, 2026): clerk.house.gov/Votes/202685
- RC 114 (April 16, 2026): clerk.house.gov/Votes/2026114
- RC 199 (June 3, 2026): clerk.house.gov/Votes/2026199

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